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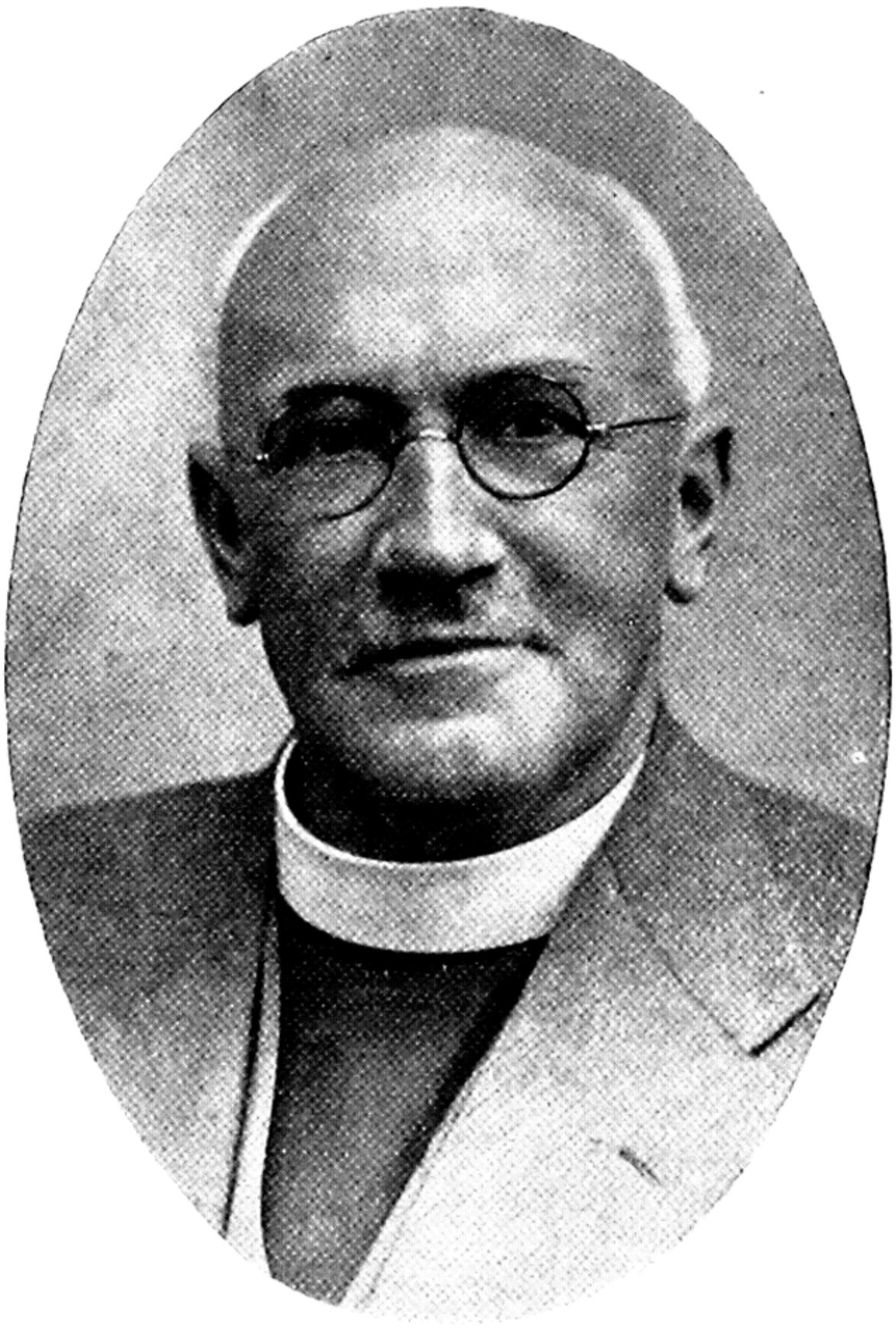

W. H. ALDIS

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by

Andrew MacBeath,
M.A., B.D.

Foreword by Bishop Frank Houghton

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Preface

IN a letter to a friend written three weeks before the end came, Mr. Aldis in his playful way ended thus : " I would love to see you again and have a good talk. I think I had better book the first month in Heaven for a long talk ! "

The friendliness and the frolicsomeness were both characteristic of the man, but so also was that hint of forward-reaching thought which had already appeared in the Opening Message given at the 1947 Keswick Convention.

It was typical of Mr. Aldis also that his conclusion to a letter should have such an " off the record " flavour, for he never dreamed that anyone should take down what he said, or write a book about him. " A good talk," like Johnson, he looked forward to enjoying, but among his friends no one acted as his Boswell. It seemed so unlikely that he should leave us. Even now it is difficult to accept his absence as a fact.

When the request came to me from representative people that I should compile a Memoir, I gratefully and gladly assented. A man who enquires after one's youngest son in tones of enjoyment, and even glee, is an unusual man. And Mr. Aldis did that. He quite won my heart by the gleam of happiness with which he waited for me to tell him my family news. A rare man, capable of entering into other people's lives, so full of disinterested and Christlike love—it has been a privilege to attempt to portray him. Moreover the task appeared like a chance to exhibit within a human life the glory of God, so I accepted it as from Him.

To all who have helped I express my deep and warm gratitude. The unnamed contributors have made this book what it is. To Mr. Fred Mitchell, Mr. Clarence Foster and to my brother, Dr. John MacBeath, I am especially indebted for much of valuable suggestion. They took the trouble to read the manuscript and helped me by their counsel.

ANDREW MACBEATH.

Foreword

THERE is an aptness about writing of the late Chairman of the Keswick Convention from a situation in which the Keswick message can be put to a more searching test than in normal days. China—the land to which Mr. Aldis dedicated his life, which he served so long and which he loved right to the end—is passing through the worst crisis of this century. Chinese Christians and missionaries are being challenged as never before to prove the reality, the robustness, and the radiance of their faith in the living God. Keswick stands for the certainty that He will keep His Word, and that His illimitable resources are available for every believer in such a time as this. And since by life and word Mr. Aldis was an exponent of this message, I am happy to be writing a foreword to this brief account of one whom I knew and loved for nearly twenty-nine years.

As I recall my first acquaintance with him when I was a candidate for the China Inland Mission, I am impressed with the fact that the same faculty for winning the confidence of young people, and making them aware that he enjoyed their company, persisted through all the years that followed. I suppose I was as callow and immature as most young men of my age, but he sought me out during the few days that I spent at Newington Green, and I knew instinctively that he was talking with me not from a sense of duty, but because he wanted to do so. I felt it was an immense privilege to join the C.I.M., and while he said nothing which would foster a sense of my own importance, he did encourage me to believe that by the grace of God I could make a worth-while contribution to the building of His Church in China.

When I entered into more intimate fellowship with him as a junior member of the Home Staff, I owed much to the same trait in his character—that of encouraging and inspiring his fellow-workers. How welcome were his visits to my office, and how approachable he was when I visited his ! I am half afraid that I presumed on the relationship, and that I was too near him to appreciate how great a man he was. The suggestion that he might be appointed Home Director was novel to me at first because I knew him so well, but soon became obvious for the very same reason.

On the platform or in the pulpit he never once disappointed me. Sometimes I was amused by his rather frequent habit of disclaiming that he had any intention of giving an address, and then proceeding to expound a passage of Scripture so that it lived, and the Spirit of God applied it to my heart and conscience. Busy man as he was, he never left the impression that he was ill-prepared.

He had a wide circle of friends, and a host of confidants who were encouraged by his sympathy and profited by his counsel. The Fire that burned in him, at which we warmed ourselves, is still burning, and if we discover the secret of his life we shall find One who can teach us, so that like him we may be teachers of others, and all glory be given where alone it belongs.

Shanghai.

FRANK HOUGHTON.

1

The Time and the Man

AT seventy-seven he went from us, swiftly. Busy, buoyant, possessed of magnificent vitality, a man who could not be placed "on the shelf"—it is difficult to see how death overtook him.

The year of his birth was 1871, and that seems significant in no small degree, for it was the year in which the Germans entered Paris. Germany's triumph over France and subsequent intoxication with dreams of power ushered in an epoch of world ferment which forms the background against which the life of W. H. Aldis was lived out for God. The world was becoming a swiftly changing scene. Movement, speed, upheaval, change, war and revolution—such were the features of the age in which he lived. To an unusual degree his life was caught in the currents of violent change and prolonged disquiet in both East and West.

Yet it is not the outward events nor their effects that one recalls in thinking of him. These neither dictated nor determined his course. He did not live from the circumference, but from the centre, and the centre of his life was God.

He was a young man of twenty-six when he went to China in 1897, the year that marked the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. Tranquil prosperity rested on our land ; complacent optimism was in the thinking of our people. It is the only "quiet" date in his lifetime (unless 1902, the year of his marriage, makes a pair). It is the end of an era, for even in 1897 there was one prophetic voice that sensed the insecurity of human things, and gave us the safeguarding prayer :

God of our fathers, known of old . . .
Be with us yet
Lest we forget—lest we forget.

The prophetic voice was not much regarded. The South African war was not far away. But China was already a land of gravely disturbed conditions. Here the newcomer witnessed recurring outbreaks of rioting and revolution, and the worst was yet to come. The year 1900 was the year of blood for the missionaries in China. The Boxer rising was a fanatical attempt to drive all foreigners out of the country and its first onset was on such a scale of ruthlessness

that swift measures had to be taken for the evacuation of missionaries and their families to the coast. Not all escaped. A disillusioning experience it might have proved for any young missionary, but he had made no bargain with God for security and peace. No plan was altered. Undeflected he went on.

Only another decade was to pass before the Chinese Revolution burst upon the tormented land. Shanghai again afforded sanctuary —then back to the work. A few years later the Revolution in Russia caught him in its toils. After travelling across Siberia with his wife and three boys, he was detained in Petrograd by a strange piece of Russian intransigence. The European war was shaking the whole continent. The Aldis family after a nine-day train journey from Petrograd reached Bergen. Thence, crossing the submarine-infested sea, they reached the homeland whose sufferings and agonies and sacrifices offered a very troubled nest for those seeking relaxation and rest.

Change and strife continued alongside the extravagant idealism of the world's uneasy peace, and there was little respite in East or West. It was in 1929, when as new Home Director of the China Inland Mission he visited North America, that the economic crisis disturbed the United States from end to end, revealing the dubious foundations of world stability. He revisited China in late 1938, a China wantonly invaded by Japan, and he saw in Chapei and Hongkew such destruction and devastation as his soul loathed. But the track of war followed him westward. From that brief visit to the Far East he returned in time to be in the thick of danger when London was bombed from the air, and again, after a few years' breathing-space, he was at the heart of things when flying bombs and rockets made hideous the nights around his home in Kent.

Through fifty years, hazards, turbulence and shrill-voiced changes were inwoven with his work. The stages of his life were also land-marks in the world's unrest. An epitome of his life on its outward side could have been this : " I walk in the midst of trouble." But the message he leaves is the witness his life bears to the unshakeable peace of God. Through the story there seems to find voice again that ancient saying of assurance and calm : " Yet shall the righteous hold on his way."

The adventurousness of his outward career contributed, no doubt, towards making him alert to significant events. He had a keen eye to discern political actions and decisions which would have far-reaching consequences. But he was no cold-hearted watcher, more

interested in a theory than in human beings. Looking, as he did, to see God's purposes ripen in the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, he yet loved his native land and he loved China with a warmth that made him a fervent intercessor. For years he led the morning missionary prayer meetings at Keswick in the spirit of John Wesley, who had taken the world as his parish.

To a man with such a deep sense of things unseen, it became a heavy burden and a poignant grief to note how the ecclesiastical leaders of Britain in her time of greatest crisis failed to strike any clear prophetic note. Gatherings for prayer and repentance and humiliation before God were the one thing for which his mind and spirit craved. These, both during and after the war, he earnestly promoted. Chafing against the Church's slowness, he mourned the absence of a clarion-call from recognized authorities. In a paper he submitted for "The Keswick Convention in Print," published in 1941 when the holding of a large Convention at Keswick was out of the question, the Chairman wrote :

"*It is time to seek the Lord* . . . The very existence of civilization is being threatened . . . Leagues, pacts, covenants, agreements, ententes, and understandings have one by one been discredited. Among the clamouring voices in the confusion, one is heard offering the world 'a new order,' but when the new order is to be ushered in by massacre, torture, destruction, desolation, lying and cynical hypocrisy . . . we would rather perish than accept a new order built on such a foundation.

"But what is really most tragic in this world situation is the indisputable fact of the comparative powerlessness of organized Christianity to do anything to meet the terrific spiritual need of the hour . . . What makes the situation increasingly parlous is the apparent indifference of the Church leaders to this condition of things.

"Where is the voice of the prophet today ? Silent—in the hour of our greatest need ! Those magnificent Old Testament prophets were truer patriots than the majority of Church leaders today. They loved their country and their people with a deep, passionate devotion, and for that very reason they refused to be silenced ; but in season and out of season, with breaking hearts and impassioned voice, they called on their people to repent and return to God."

Such was the prophet and patriot and leader whom we commemorate.

In the wide constituency of the China Inland Mission and through

his position and influence as Chairman of the Keswick Convention, William Aldis was at the time of his death, in the words of Mr. Fred Mitchell, " the best known and most loved man in Evangelical Christendom." The shock which his sudden passing brought to thousands of Christian people was voiced in a shoal of letters in which there recurs continually a double sense of loss : on the one hand, the loss to the Church Militant of a wise and fearless and outstanding leader, and on the other hand, the sense of personal impoverishment experienced by a great multitude who felt that they had lost a very dear friend.

2

Formative Influences

THAT W. H. Aldis was fortunate in the period of his birth becomes plain from a perusal of the Memoir of his great-grandfather, the Rev. William Steadman, D.D. Eager evangelist as the revered gentleman was, and privileged to see the Churches in the West Riding of Yorkshire double and treble their numbers, yet the contents of his Journal depict his faith and life as lacking glow and joyous certainty and heavenly peace. That may be one reason why his great-grandson never was a lover of that high Calvinism.

Steadman enjoyed some rich advantages. His Journal has this entry : " Finished Edwards's sermon *On the Excellences of Christ* and was delighted with it. O what a Saviour ! O how suitable ! How lovely ! O the madness of those who reject Him ! " He likewise benefited greatly from reading Jonathan Edwards's *Life of Brainerd*, and Owen *On the Glory of Christ*. His record after the reading of these is as follows : " I obtained relief and saw that if I had not known Christ before, I did know him then." As an honest evangelist he could come to this conclusion : " Methinks I can say to others, ' O taste and see that the Lord is good.' " Nevertheless, Steadman continually swings back from his joy-begetting contemplation of Christ, and enters again a region of shadow. Says his son and biographer, " It is evident that Mr. Steadman had pursued a steady course of self-discipline, submitting his feelings to severe analysis, chastising every passion, and bewailing every sin." Steadman, in truth, had rejoiced in the objective efficacy of Christ's sacrifice and bathed his soul in radiance when he kept his gaze on the Redeemer, but he did not learn how to let this objective wealth end the penury of his own subjective condition. Lapsing into gloomy introspection, he was tortured about the security of his own salvation. If he did know himself to be " in Christ," he never vibrated with the sense of elation which says, " There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

William Steadman was a Baptist Pastor who, to use his own words of 3rd January, 1793, " Wrote a letter to Mr. Carey of Leicester and sent it, together with half-a-guinea subscription for the (Baptist) Society established for Propagating the Gospel, etc." and he became the friend of Dr. Ryland and Andrew Fuller. He was once earnestly entreated by the saintly Samuel Pearce to become his companion

that they might offer themselves as missionary candidates "to labour among the Hindoos." Samuel Pearce wrote to Steadman: "Often my heart, in the sincerest ardour, thus breathes forth its desires unto God; 'Here am I: send me!' . . . Oh! if I could find a heart that had been tortured and ravished like my own in this respect, I should form a new kind of alliance, and feel a friendship of a novel species . . . Whence is it that I thus write to *you*, as I have never written to anyone before? . . . Tell me, my dear Steadman, tell me how you have felt and how you still feel.

"Your very affectionate, though unworthy, friend and brother,
S. Pearce."

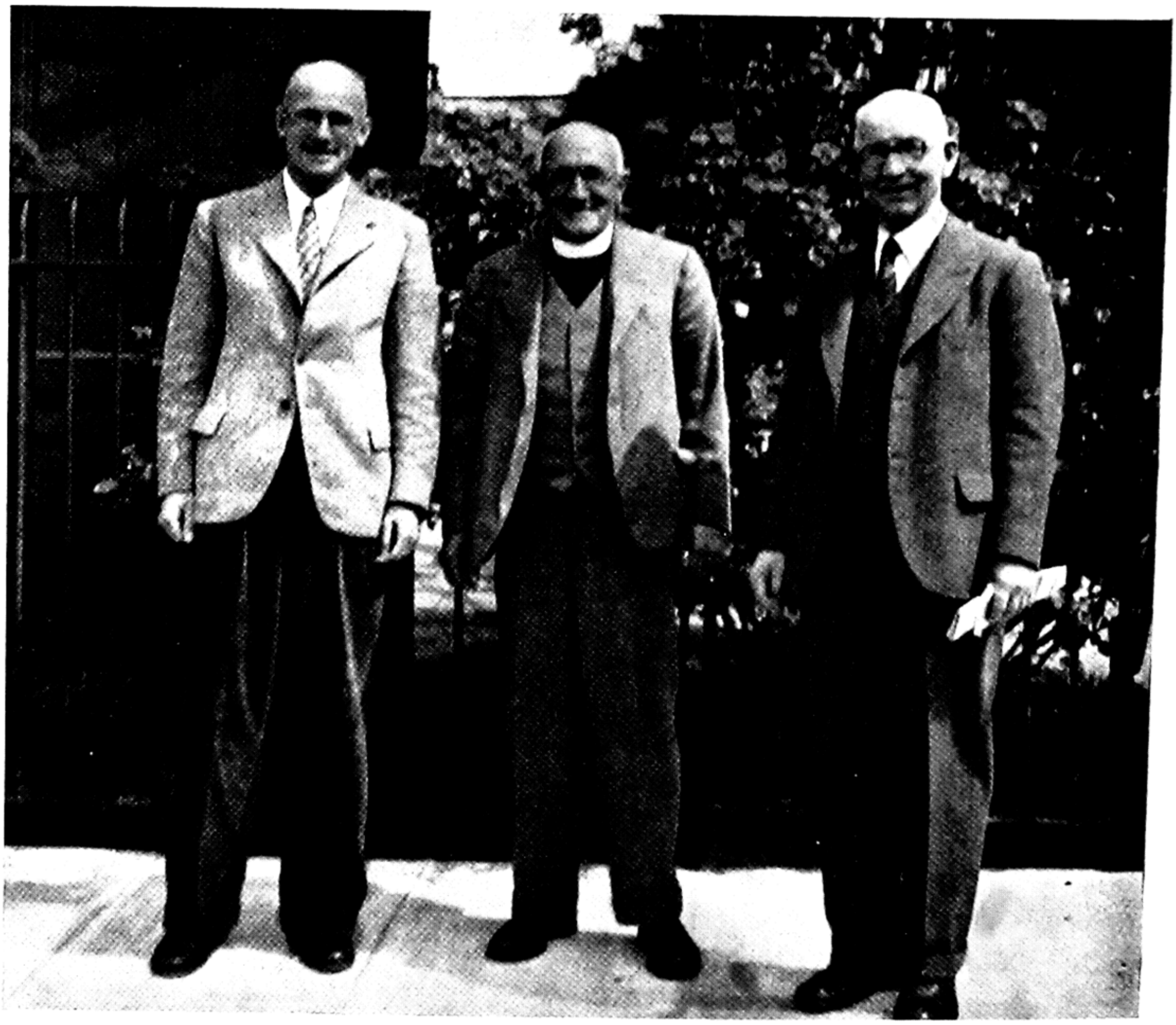
Steadman, though his call was to labour in the homeland and to become the President of the Northern Baptist Education Society, training men in Bradford for the ministry of the Word, had thus both by his theological reading and his fraternal association the most royal of attachments. He remained an earnest missionary advocate. Would that his Calvinism had been warmed by the glow of the Methodists, and cheered by that golden ring of assurance which is vital to the Christian's deepest joy, as well as to the most effective evangelism! His great-grandson became the heir of all that was best in evangelicalism.

One of Steadman's students at Bradford, John Aldis by name, married the youngest daughter of his college President. These became the paternal grandparents of William Henry Aldis, and John, like his father-in-law, had his life's work chronicled in a Memoir.

Born at Colchester in 1808, the son of a shoemaker in humble circumstances, John Aldis left school at a very early age to help his father in his business. He was only thirteen when the family migrated to London, but it was then that he began to supplement the insufficient education of his childhood, and taught himself both Greek and Latin. His diligence and unmistakeable ability attracted the attention of his pastor, who opened the way for John to be accepted in the Baptist College in Yorkshire. His course there was short, not more than two years, but how zealously he used it! There he learned how to learn. There, too, he gained his life partner, Miss Steadman, and the union produced a family of true mental and moral worth. The eldest son became a preacher; the second son was Senior Wrangler and Smith's Prizeman in 1861, while the third and fourth sons were sixth and second Wrangler respectively, the latter being also Smith's Prizeman.

EVER YOUNG IN THE JOY OF THE LORD

BISHOP TAYLOR SMITH AND W. H. ALDIS



A HAPPY SNAPSHOT AT KESWICK 1947

GORDON ALDIS, W. H. ALDIS AND A. W. BRADLEY

One of the ablest preachers of his time, John Aldis became pastor of King's Road Chapel, Reading, in 1855. In 1856, quite early in his career, C. H. Spurgeon visited Reading, and preached to densely crowded congregations in King's Road Chapel. During the thirteen years of his ministry in Reading, John Aldis had seen the chapel enlarged, this in his third year. He is described as " having the gift of eloquence in no ordinary degree. With a voice sweet yet penetrating, he would often hold his audiences spellbound." His hair in early life was jet black, and his eyes equally black, yet luminous. " Somewhat short in stature, Mr. Aldis was a powerfully built man, and in his best years of considerable physical strength." This was the legacy of godliness and healthy robustness that the grandson inherited, and it is of particular interest to us, who knew the grandson, to read of his grandparent that " his finely shaped head was well set above broad shoulders, and he was ever greatly devoted to walking exercise." How well we recall the broad shoulders, and how vividly we can picture the grandson who strode out so blithely over the roads of Eastern Szechwan, visiting the outstations from his centre in Paoning.

Vigorous walking, however, was a pleasure from which the fifth son of John Aldis was debarred. Henry S. Aldis, the father of William, was made lame by an accident in cricket during his boyhood, and did not, like his eldest brother, enter the ministry, nor, like the three brothers just above him, go to Cambridge University. He became confidential clerk to a business firm in Reading. He married a Miss Sarah Kitchen, and through her came to associate himself with the assembly of the Brethren. One son (the subject of this Memoir) and five daughters were born to them, and William well remembered that one activity which marked the family's arrival at the resort for the summer holidays was the search for the place in which the local assembly of Brethren " broke bread."

To this home and its atmosphere of intimacy with God and the diligent study of His Word, William attributed much for which he retained deep gratitude. The upbringing of a " Brethren " home is not slack. The reins are not held in a loose hand. The teaching imbibed at the " assembly " is not about a vague Divine benevolence. Undoubtedly the robust godliness which was typical of W. H. Aldis had its beginnings in the home where, with his five sisters, he was moulded for God. It was while still a boy at home that William was converted and baptized.

What in the meantime were the changes from a hundred years

before which secured that the young convert should live on the sunny side of life? As compared with William Steadman, young William Aldis was a product of that more genial spiritual climate which prevailed in England after the 1859 revival, and after the visits to this country of Moody and Sankey. He grew up in close touch with the Children's Special Service Mission, and early felt his affinity with that joy in the Lord which was its distinguishing mark. He entered into the heritage of appropriating faith and childlike reliance on the promises of God which had blossomed and borne fruit in the lives of those two remarkable men of God, George Muller and Hudson Taylor. Tormenting introspection could not spread its poison through a nature thus renewed. At home, most of all, the lad must have learned the secret of allowing God to become the health of his countenance. From whatever sources his wholesome faith was fed, it was through a godly home that these influences were mediated to his young and receptive soul.

After leaving school, William began the serious business of life by being articled to a surveyor, and he went through and took his articles. Those who are ready to discern significance in all the trends and choices even of a young lad's life will not reckon it merely fortuitous that the bent of his mind lay towards becoming a surveyor. It hardly seems fanciful to declare that to the very end William Aldis remained " a young man with a measuring line."

It was through a C.S.S.M. leader that the young surveyor was first persuaded to think of giving himself to full-time service. While he was on holiday in the town of Ilfracombe he helped Mr. W. R. Moore and his wife at sand services. So constantly and so eagerly was his aid volunteered, that the experienced worker discerned qualities in the keen young helper which he coveted for the wider service of God's Kingdom. He asked the young man if he had ever considered launching out in the service of God, and the reply was to this effect, " Only now am I free from various commitments and able to give up business." Mr. Moore was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Y.M.C.A. in Exeter Hall, and when some time later Mr. Aldis wrote to him, work was suggested at Bournemouth. In its heyday after the Moody revival the Y.M.C.A. was a sphere of earnest evangelistic activity, and the young secretary threw his energies into it with a consuming desire to " save some."

Winning men for Christ in his Y.M.C.A. capacity, young Aldis was brought into contact with other evangelizing agencies. Captain W. H. Dawson, Lord Cairns, and others were " deeply interested in

Gospel services on Sunday in the Shaftesbury Hall which adjoined the Y.M.C.A. buildings and drew many non-church goers of a thoughtful type." Some of the men whom the ardent young Secretary influenced had no liking for being taken to meetings of the Brethren, and showed a decided preference for the Church of England, where a devoted and earnest soul-winner, the Rev. S. A. Selwyn, was exercising a notable ministry. Called to account for engaging in Christian work among other folk than the Brethren, W.H.A. (as was his way) came to a quick decision. He rejoiced that the men he was interested in were receiving blessing, as he himself was, through the leadership of Mr. Selwyn, and he cast in his lot with him. His life service thereafter was given in membership of the Church of England.

Indeed, the Brethren and the Church of England seemed to join hands, as in fact during the 1890's, with the slogan among students—" the evangelization of the world in this generation," all Churches did, to give prominence to missionary endeavour, and it was to the obedience of faith that keen young Christians were summoned. It was in 1891, through a message from the lips of Bishop Hill, that William Aldis felt the call of God to missionary work abroad. Africa was his first love.

In 1895, while at Basingstoke, he worshipped in the Church (Countess of Huntingdon Connexion) which a family of C.M.S. missionaries on furlough also attended, and it was from the lips of Mrs. Lloyd that he learned news of a cruel massacre of missionaries at Kucheng, Fukien. The Rev. and Mrs. Robert Stuart with two of their children and nine other missionaries were butchered on 1st August of that year, and the news had a poignant interest for Mrs. Lloyd inasmuch as she and her husband first went to China in 1876 along with Mr. and Mrs. Stuart. Her passing on the story to William Aldis in 1895 led him to turn his thoughts to China and to offer for service there.

Meantime he was gaining invaluable training in his work at Boscombe, becoming better acquainted with God and His Word, and with men, their needs and their fluctuations. Whenever missionaries from China came within his orbit, he sought to find out everything he could. The Rev. W. Hope Gill writes : " I first met him in 1896 when on deputation work in the C.I.M. It was in the Y.M.C.A. in Bournemouth. He had not then actually offered, as far as I know. He asked me various questions about our C. of E. branch of the C.I.M., and was, I could see, curious to know all I could tell him.

This I did, showing him the map of our Szechwan field. On three or four occasions we had talks after the meetings I spoke at, both there and in other centres. Such was his interest that he wrote me several letters later."

To this time of enquiry with its growing desire for certainty about the future way belongs that reading of " The Story of the C.I.M." which finally helped to make it clear that God was calling him not to Africa but to China.

It is worth recording also that in 1896, during the visit to this country of the Rev. Andrew Murray from South Africa, two young men went to F. N. Charrington's Hall in Mile End Road to hear him. They afterwards reminded one another how the hymn " Moment by moment " gained its vogue in England then as a result of the teaching of that man of God. Forty years later when a Committee was appointed to prepare a new Keswick Hymn Book, one of those two young men was its Chairman—the Rev. W. H. Aldis.

Given the faith and the ardour of youth, given the concentration of purpose, what sort of young man was this who faced the unknown ? Joy in God and a loving heart towards men, these two essential characteristics were already his. Besides, he was and to some extent remained a shy man. Possibly he exaggerated the handicap of not having been to a public school or university, but the confident bearing which marks those descended from a patrician family was not his. Yet not a little of his charm as a Chairman lay in this humility, for it was the obverse side of his deep reverence before the majesty of God. It had happened with him as with Amos " Thus he showed me : and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall . . . with a plumbline in His hand. Then said the Lord, Behold I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel."

This young surveyor never ceased to have clear before him, not the world's estimate but God's. What remained typical of him was his attitude of bated breath.

3

Adventurous Apprenticeship

THE steamship *Australia* of the P. & O. line left England on 8th October, 1897. Among its passengers were three young missionaries, including W. H. Aldis. A six weeks' journey brought them to Shanghai, and soon after their visit to Mission Headquarters there, and the welcome from such leaders as J. W. Stevenson and James Stark, they proceeded to the Language School and Training Home at Anking.

The young men could hardly have arrived in China at a better time. By the end of 1897 no fewer than 633 missionaries (including Continental associate missionaries) of the C.I.M. were actually at work on the field, and there was in addition a rising tide of spiritual blessing.

In January, 1898, there arrived in Shanghai "a little company who knew the way to the Throne"—Mr. and Mrs. Hudson Taylor, Miss Henrietta Soltau and Miss Hanbury. This was to be Mr. Taylor's closing period of active service in China, and lasted only a year and nine months ; but to secure a deepened quality for the Forward Movement, he had had it much on his heart that a Keswick deputation should visit China. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Inwood arrived in the following October, but the tide was running when they came. Miss Soltau, of the Women's Department in London had written, "I go forth in conscious weakness, feeling my need of His abundant life for the untried way." God used her in a remarkable manner. Of what happened at the Training Home at Anking, Hudson Taylor wrote : "The Holy Spirit was poured out upon all present, and every one of the missionaries and students received extraordinary spiritual help. Such a Pentecostal season had never been experienced there before." Looking back on it with awe and joy, Miss Soltau wrote : "Anking, where twelve hallowed days were spent—ever to be remembered."

So deep was the impression, and so wide open the gate of heaven, that the routine work was suspended. A varied crowd of over forty young men were at that time in the Training Home, and a few of them including his special friend Walter Jennings, and Robert Gillies, used to meet every afternoon for prayer in Mr. Aldis's room.

Following upon this breath of spiritual revival, the young men

were also given a taste of life in its outward excitements, for, writes Mr. Gillies, " the highlights of the session included a riot, when the Home was in danger and quantities of Scripture portions specially prepared for the thirty thousand scholars then sitting for their literary degrees at the Provincial Examinations were publicly burnt amidst fanatical excitement and inflammatory anti-Christian denunciation."

This was the real thing ! None of the missionary recruits had any reason for disappointment through the absence of incidents. Indeed, the once-sleepy land was so full of unexpected developments that newcomers were kept on tiptoe, wondering " What next ? "

For W. H. Aldis there was no lack of what are called authentic missionary experiences. " On April 28th, 1898, Messrs. Aldis, Jennings and Morgan . . . left the training home for the Paoning district of Szechwan." So runs the bald official intimation, but it covers a literal " baptism " into an eventful life. On their first journey up the Yangtse, the boat on which the young men were travelling was wrecked. The unadorned account written by William Aldis himself is all the more revealing because it is so matter-of-fact. At Ichang, the party had been increased, so he writes :

" Our party, composed of Messrs. Farrent, W. Jennings, Morgan, Row and myself, left Ichang on May 9th. All went well as far as Kwei-fu, with the exception of one or two narrow escapes from accident. On the morning of the 20th, when but a day's journey from Kwei-fu and 240 *li* below Wanhsien, our boat was wrecked. We were running before a strong wind, and just at the foot of a rapid, struck a rock with tremendous force. The boat heeled over and immediately began to fill. As she appeared to be sinking fast, we climbed to the side, prepared to swim to shore at the last minute. We were about the middle of the river. Through God's goodness, a lifeboat came to our rescue, and took us to the shore ; and a portion of the wreck being still above water, we left three of our party on the bank, and two of us returned to try and save some of the boxes. With the aid of our captain and one of his men, we were able to rescue all but one or two . . .

" After we had succeeded in getting the things ashore, a heavy thunderstorm burst on us, and for two or three hours we were exposed to the rain while very thinly clad ; but, praise God !, through all this, and through subsequent experiences, the Lord has kept our bodies in health and vigour.

" In the meantime, our servant arranged for an old cargo boat to

take our boxes to Wanhsien, we ourselves preparing to walk. After a night in the inn in our wet clothes, we walked over to Yunyang Hsien, where we overtook the cargo boat, and, as the walking was really very bad, we boarded it, and arrived here safely on May 24th.

" We at once opened our boxes, and I regret to say that nearly everything, with the exception of clothing, is absolutely ruined. This included an organ in a sealed case, likewise all our books, also in sealed cases.

" However, we know that the Lord has a purpose in it all, and we do praise Him for sparing our lives. We have been staying here a few days, drying our clothes and repacking, and hope to start again on Monday next for Chungking and Paoning respectively.

" Will you join with us in praising the Lord for His preserving care ? We can all testify that, from the time the boat struck, we have been kept in perfect peace, and do not for a moment regret anything that has happened, because we know that when we are in the line of His will, nothing can come to us but what is for His glory."

Like John Wesley, the young man took no harm from spending the night in wet clothes, and like the Apostle Paul he readily adapted himself to an unpropertied existence, for he wrote, " The desire of each one of us is that 2 Corinthians 6 : 10 may be our experience : ' as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' "

Following this initiation into a truly apostolic attitude, and this entrance upon the vicissitudes of a missionary career, there was also some stir and excitement at the mission station of Paoning within a fortnight of the new missionary's arrival. In the neighbouring town of Shunking, a mob had assembled in the courtyard of the house rented by the missionaries. They became disorderly and threatening, and broke open doors and boxes, so that the missionaries decided to escape to the yamen. As they made their way the crowd increased, and grew more and more unruly, until the missionaries found themselves jammed in a narrow lane, unable to make headway. Local police helped them through the crowd, but a shower of stones greeted them. They walked along the street, hoping to get quietly to the provincial yamen, but the crowd pressed nearer, stones became more difficult to evade, and breaking into a run, they reached the yamen with the crowd yelling after them. Afterwards the mob found vent for their feelings by smashing everything the missionaries had left, and finally razed the house to the ground.

Escorted by the military official and eight men to Paoning, the

missionaries had this story to tell to a group which included young William Aldis, who arrived only a fortnight previously. A week later Bishop Cassels wrote of Paoning : " For the last week, things have been in a great ferment here in Paoning. There has never been anything like it all the time we have been here. Three or four papers have been thrown in our doorways, warning us that the houses are to be destroyed and the foreigners killed. But," adds Bishop Cassels, " we have commended our case to the Lord, and are kept in peace. Meanwhile we have neglected no precaution, and certainly the officials are doing all they possibly can to protect us."

Such were the outward beginnings of missionary life for the young recruit. But those who wrote about the perils told that they were kept in peace. Fortified by this inner calm, he pressed forward in an earnest desire to become a skilled worker. The language barrier was the greatest obstacle. In later life he told how, at that time of enforced dumbness, he was helped by the thought that he need not be entirely useless even in an evangelistic sense, for he could *evangelize by prayer* ! That is what he decided to do, taking one particular man upon his heart, praying that he might be led to attend the preaching, and praying that he might be converted. And his report is that the man in question was truly brought to a knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

What then of Paoning, the headquarters of Bishop Cassels, who in 1895 had been consecrated as first Bishop of West China ? The following account is from the pen of Mrs. Bishop, a notable traveller, who became the founder of the Memorial Hospital built in Paoning. Her visit was paid just about the time of Mr. Aldis's coming, and is therefore the more welcome.

" Paoning Fu was a hive of work. From morning to night something was going on, both men's work and women's work. The compound where the men, single and married, lived seemed always to be full of people. There were some in the congregation who had received the grace of Christ, and had become devout and simple Christians. One . . . had been a sorcerer ; there he sat at the gate studying the Scriptures, with a bright face for all comers . . . The church was packed perfectly full, with Christians in front and others behind, but all in order and quietness. The singing was hearty, if not harmonious. A Chinese read the Scriptures in the service. The congregation was devout in its demeanour, and earnest in its attention. One could not have found a more reverent, better behaved, and more attentive audience in all England than in the

church in Paoning Fu. One thinks of such a place as being indeed a shining light in the darkness."

Six weeks after his arrival back from furlough, the Rev. E. O. Williams died in Paoning, and thus early in 1899 there came a new challenge to William Aldis to equip himself to replace this deeply valued worker. At first the Bishop had been receiving secretarial help from his young assistant, but now was compelled to give a great deal of help to him in the oversight of the parochial work of Paoning. There can be no doubt that the added responsibility thrust upon him in a seriously under-staffed station made the recruit mature quickly. It was plain that the young man must prepare for ordination.

During 1898 some of the mission stations in the province of Szechwan had been destroyed by riots. In the following year these outbursts became more frequent. Restlessness increased through most of China. Nationalist feeling was inflamed over the expansionist policy of three European powers which had on one pretext or another seized such Chinese ports as Kiao-Chow, Wei-Hai-Wei and Port Arthur. Conservative China resented foreign intrusiveness and soon there burst on a great scale the full fury of an outbreak which assumed an anti-Christian character. It was the Boxer Rising. Further to the north-east, and especially in Shansi, the Dowager Empress's edict ran like a prairie fire, bringing death to the missionaries. The Viceroys of Szechwan and the lower Yangtse dared to disregard Peking's inflammatory order. Nevertheless in July, after the woeful first six months of the year, the British Consul at Chungking instructed Bishop Cassels to bid all Europeans in his diocese seek places of safety.

On 11th August, the women workers of the area left by water, escorted in a separate boat by W. H. Aldis and C. B. Hannah. The Bishop remained on for the time being, even after all missionaries from the West had withdrawn, and then joined a large number of evacuated missionaries at Shanghai.

Drawn apart in the great Chinese city, missionaries of all societies were forced to review their activities. Separated, as though summoned into their Master's presence for " recommissioning " (a word which W.H.A. was frequently to use), many were brought anew to the place of dedication, and to the work of prayer. Three hundred of these belonging to the C.I.M. at this time sent a loving letter of sympathy to the Mission's revered founder, torn at heart as they knew he was by the poignant story of murder and anguish and pain

from which missionaries' children and Chinese Christians had suffered no less than foreign workers. In his reply Hudson Taylor wrote :

" As we have read over your signatures one by one we have thanked God for sparing you to us and to China. The sad circumstances through which we have all suffered have been permitted by God for His glory and our good, and when He has tried us and our native brethren He will doubtless reopen the work at present closed, under more favourable circumstances than before.

" We thank God for the grace given to those who have suffered. It is a wonderful honour He has put upon us as a mission to be trusted with so great a trial, and to have among us so many counted worthy of a martyr's crown. Some who have been spared have perhaps suffered more than some of those taken, and our Lord will not forget. How much it has meant to us to be so far from you in the hour of trial we cannot express, but the throne of grace has been as near to us here as it would have been in China . . ."

It was in the same spirit of yieldedness to God that W. H. Aldis knelt in Shanghai Cathedral and made his vows when on St. Andrew's Day, 1900, Bishop Cassels ordained him as deacon. Could anything have been more impressive than the background of bloodshed and terror against which the ceremony stands out ? That nothing had been permitted to distract his mind from concentration on his holy task is evident from the fact, as a reminiscent colleague tells with admiration and pride, that he had " come out top among the ordination candidates."

The time spent in Shanghai was, however, memorable for another reason. Miss Lottie H. Carver of Norwich had arrived in China during the previous autumn. After some months spent in the Language School at Yangchow, she was designated to Paoning, and had lived a short time there. But it was in the enforced leisure of evacuation to Shanghai that she and William Aldis became acquainted and their love was born. The interruption of a station programme had brought to view a plan of God.

4

Enrichment of Experience

NOT long after the aforetime surveyor was ordained to deacon's orders, the way opened for a return to Szechwan. The Bishop prepared to leave with a party of fellow-workers, all men, his intention being to explore the situation, without meanwhile endangering the lives of any women. Passages were secured on a German steamer, and great hopes were entertained for the success of this (to the missionaries) novel craft for negotiating the Yangtse rapids. Ichang was left on 27th December, and the first serious rapid was passed. As another rapid was approached, above Ichang at the entrance to the Ox River Gorge, the Chinese pilot urged the Captain to keep close by a certain rock, to keep in the channel, but the latter supposed he knew better. He followed his own course, and, while going full steam ahead, his vessel struck a rock.

In the panic that ensued, Chinese travellers swarmed on the two lifeboats, and these capsized. Many of the frightened people were drowned. The steamer tilted ominously, and the dozen missionaries congregated on her stern, for her rudder was soon far out of the water. Bishop Cassels breathed calm into the company, and commended all to God's safe keeping. Most of the younger men capable of swimming jumped into the rapids and made for the shore. The current was so swift that there was, happily, no suction. Chinese lifeboats appeared and rescued others. The heroic Bishop, who left the steamer just before the Captain, was the last to reach the shore in safety. Swept backwards down stream the wrecked steamer rapidly sank in deep water, and everything was lost.

As each missionary emerged from peril, he swiftly thought of his colleagues and some time was spent in eager search before it was ascertained that all had safely reached the shore. Then in thanksgiving for the preservation of all their party, they dedicated themselves afresh to God. It was Christmas week, and the weather was cold. Most of the missionaries had divested themsleves of their upper garments before taking to the water. We can therefore appreciate the gratitude felt by the Rev. C. B. Hannah, who writes, " When I had to change my wet garments for dry, Aldis kindly deprived himself of some of his own in order to clothe my shivering frame."

Looking back on the event and recalling the anxious moments

of search for fellow-missionaries after the ship's sinking, W.H.A. gave a vivid picture and also a touch of that comic relief which often belongs to such a situation, when he said of a brother missionary who had entreated him to stand by him, " I looked, never expecting to see my colleague again, and there was W., like an old walrus, shaking his moustache."

Passage was secured back to Ichang on a junk, and the city was reached at 3 o'clock next morning. It was Mr. Aldis's second experience of shipwreck in a Yangtse rapid, and the second time when he was counted worthy (as Miss Soltau had expressed it on the previous occasion) to suffer the loss of all things. But it can be understood that he was not a lover of river craft on the Yangtse.

The loss of money and goods in the wreck involved inevitable delay, and to Bishop Cassels the delay brought also a bitter disappointment. A cabled message was received from Shanghai informing him that the peace terms between the Boxers and the Western diplomatic authorities were agreed, and it was suggested that the Bishop should return to Shanghai at once to escort back to Szechwan his family and the women workers. When Marshall Broomhall was writing the life of Bishop Cassels, Aldis told him he had been at the Bishop's side when the telegram arrived and remembered vividly how, when the Bishop rose to read the telegram his voice choked with emotion. He had been so eager to brave any dangers of the situation by entering his diocese first. Later, with deep feeling he said to Aldis, " I feel I must return to Shanghai and bring up the rest of the party, and you will go on alone and have the privilege of being the first to get back to the diocese." The young missionary of less than three years' experience was rapidly becoming the Bishop's right-hand man.

It had been an eventful journey. It was also a deeply moving experience for the young missionary to arrive back on the scene of so much devoted labour, the place where prayer was wont to be made, the furnace of affliction in which many of his Chinese friends had come through a fiery test. Miss Carver followed in the Bishop's party, and had the grief of watching a loved colleague, Miss A. F. Wheeler, succumb to peritonitis, dying on 26th March, while the party was still *en route*.

Following the great wave of popularity which came like a reaction after the Boxer persecution, the missionaries found their work expanding rapidly. The Chinese seemed so eager to hear the Gospel and to be taught that the few workers qualified to meet the demands

of the situation were greatly overstrained. Mr. Aldis was not unduly carried away by the temporary phase of prosperity. He was accustomed to look deeper. He was not content with any religious success which failed to show that sin had been penitently confessed and put away. A few contributions which he sent as fuel for prayer to the broadsheet " Monthly Notes ", sent from Shanghai to every C.I.M. missionary, indicate his hunger for real results, and give a glimpse of his pastoral care. From them, too, we can gather evidence of the mature experience he was gaining as a missionary, and of the initiative which he brought to the work.

" Monthly Notes " of September, 1901, carries the following paragraphs from his pen, written from Paoning in 3rd August. " In reporting on our Church work here, I am glad to record that we had the joy of witnessing the baptism of 17 men and women, from the outstations, on July 28. Many of these were amongst the number who suffered persecution last year and stood firm. It was, therefore, with joy and satisfaction that one witnessed their baptism.

" We have also been able to receive a few more in the city as catechumens ; and next month, please God, we shall be able to record more baptisms.

" In our evangelistic and more aggressive work, I am glad to report encouragement. A class I have on Friday nights, for literary men, for the study of the Word of God, is increasing in number. The Bishop offered a prize in connection with this class, for the best essay on ' The difference between the Gospel and the teaching of Confucius,' and it has resulted in nearly sixty essays, from the leading scholars of the city, being sent in. Many of these essays shew a very real knowledge of the Truth, and a tendency to let go the traditions of Confucius in favour of the Word of the Living God.

" I have also secured a shop, in the main street, for preaching and book-selling. During this warm weather, there are many listeners to the preaching, in the evening.

" There is a marked change in the attitude of scholars and gentry towards the Gospel. We have had deputations from many places lately—in one case, a petition was sent by the leading gentry of the city —asking that we commence work in these cities. Of course, in many cases, there is little, if any, knowledge of the Truth we preach ; but if this is God's way of opening doors, we must be ready to enter, and, in the meantime, pray for more labourers to help reap the harvest.

" Our Boys' School continues to keep up well in attendance and encouragement. One would only need to breathe the words, ' Western

Education ' and we would soon be inundated with scholars of the better class ; but so far we have not seen our way to breathe those two magic words.

" I regret that I have not been able to visit the outstations, and have had to trust largely to our native catechists in carrying on this growing work. The knowledge of those who were baptized last week, however, was very encouraging.

" We long for more workers to share in the work, which is capable of unlimited expansion all around ; but just now our strength and ability is insufficient to carry out our aims and desires, and we rest in the thought that He knows and the work is His."

The letter is of historic interest. " More labourers," were needed, and the growing work was being entrusted to Chinese catechists. There occurred therefore to the young missionary the possibility that he ought to reconsider his attitude of cold aloofness to " Western Education." Was it enough merely to disdain such an enterprise, and to do nothing ? Some one employed of W. H. Aldis at a later date the word " opportunist," in its healthy sense, and there is little doubt that his quick mind took the bearings of his situation in a new way some months after the above letter was written. The work was God's work, but need Aldis acquiesce in the shortage of labourers ? Might he not initiate some enterprise for training labourers from amongst the Chinese ? The significance of what he achieved by his opportunism is indicated from the pen of others, who grasped its far-reaching fruitfulness.

The Rev. C. B. Hannah writes : " Mr. Aldis felt the need of a school on Western lines for sons of Christians, and in the beginning of the year 1902 a start was made with twenty boys, about half being boarders. We shared the teaching. The Lord added His blessing and early in 1903 several of the lads were converted and baptized, amongst them James Yen, now Dr. James Yen, the originator of the Mass Education Movement in China and now Chairman of the Sino-American Rural Reconstruction Commission. He is also a member of U.N.E.S.C.O. Other pupils of those days have succeeded in life as genuine Christians and have assisted the Church financially and in other ways. Aldis's loving ministry to these lads has been abundantly rewarded."

Dr. Sherwood Eddy gives the following account of this relationship between master and pupil, writing from the point of view of the boy, James Yen : " Before he was eleven, he was sent to a school for boys in the far western province of Szechwan. The saintly and

able principal of the school was W. H. Aldis, recently head of the China Inland Mission in London. Jimmie cried himself to sleep the first night in homesickness, but he implored the principal the next day not to send him home as too young to study in a boarding school. The second night he wept, but stifled his sobs in his pillow. Aldis's knowledge of Chinese was painfully limited, but he became a father to the lonely little Chinese boy : and in his character, life, and love, Jimmie saw the life of Jesus reproduced, and from this godly missionary's fatherly care he came to know God as a Father. Here in the school of the China Inland Mission he avidly studied the New Testament, and became a Christian at the age of twelve."

It is interesting to note in passing that Yen adopted the name he came to use as a Christian name from that same family of Stuarts of whom we have read that the massacre of the parents in 1895 spurred young William Aldis at Basingstoke to offer for missionary service. The five orphaned children who had been sent back to England after the catastrophe were constrained by the love of Christ to give their lives in missionary service to the people at whose hands their parents had died, and it was one of these five from whom in sheer affection Yen adopted the name James as his own.

During Dr. Yen's last visit to Britain, he paid a visit to his loved teacher and father-in-God, and presented to Mr. Aldis a copy of Sherwood Eddy's book, *Pathfinders of the World Missionary Crusade*. On the fly-leaf, under date September 1, 1947, it bears this inscription,

" To My Revered Teacher,
With Love and Gratitude from his pupil,
Jim."

Miss Mildred Cable writes : " One of the great joys of W. H. Aldis's life must have been the amazing part he was allowed to have in the spread of literacy in China through one of his scholars, James Yen. This young man went to France (in the 1914–18 war) after having had a great spiritual experience, and there discovered the helplessness of the men who were working as coolies. They were unable to get news from home or to write letters home, and in some cases settled down to blank despair. James Yen after considerable thought and trouble, evolved a system in which he used 1,000 of the best known Chinese characters, and in these wrote a simple newspaper and various handbooks. He gathered the men round him, taught them to read, helped them to write letters home, and when after the war he returned to China he took control of a village where

he carried into practice the theory which he had, that so much could be done by the use of the simpler devices. By means of his preaching, thousands have become literate. Mr. Aldis spoke to me, on more than one occasion, of the immense joy it was to him to realise that through this young man he had been able to help so many of the people of the country to which he had devoted his life."

What then of the developing missionary, the Bishop's former secretary and constant assistant, the schoolmaster and itinerant pastor? Perhaps the acid test of a missionary's character is the impression he leaves on a junior colleague. Here is a glimpse of W.H.A. through the eyes of C. B. Hannah.

" My duties were to relieve Mr. Aldis of local secretary work, to study the language, and to give general assistance. I could not have had a better senior than Mr. Aldis. I soon learned to honour and respect him for his unselfish thought and care for his junior, combined with his outstanding qualities as a leader. His example of persistent activity and inspiring initiative proved of great help to me in that early period of my service in China, and his beneficial influence is with me to this day.

" As a preacher W.H.A. was always to be relied upon to give a helpful message suitable both to the occasion and the hearers. His facility in preparing sermons and addresses was remarkable, owing doubtless to his twin gifts of fertile brain and fervent spirit. Some of his messages remain with me to this day. He spoke Chinese fluently.

" As a pastor he excelled in organizing and conducting conferences of local preachers, gatherings of country and city believers, and preaching campaigns. He always had some new idea or plan for each occasion."

Some of Mr. Aldis's notes about these activities will be before us soon, evidence of the eager working of his mind. In all his labours, there had come an added inspiration with his engagement. Love-making put higher quality into his service of Christ. But the lady of his choice had been transferred to another station, in accordance with the Mission's rules, and her absence made him long that the slow-footed months might pass and bring the wedding day. At last the time arrived, the probationer's qualifications were pronounced adequate, and Miss Carver came back to Paoning. The marriage was conducted in the Church there by their loved and revered Bishop Cassels on 28th May, 1902. Three days before, on Trinity Sunday, by the laying on of the same Bishop's hands, the Rev. W. H. Aldis had been ordained Priest.

Early in 1903 Miss K. M. Aldis was added to the staff at Paoning,

much to her brother's joy, and she became a greatly valued and deeply devoted worker in the Girls' School there.

Fifteen months after the wedding day there appeared in " Monthly Notes " a brief paragraph to this effect : " The serious illness of Mrs. Aldis at Paoning with Famine Fever has caused much anxiety on her account." This formed one of the first trials of their wedded life.

A further sorrow befell them when in July, 1904, the infant daughter who had come as God's sweet gift to them died within three weeks of birth. Identifying themselves with the people to whom their souls were knit through prayer and faith, the missionaries were exposed and, all unknowingly, their child was exposed, to infection that was carried and concealed. The child contracted small-pox from the Chinese nurse.

Through the eyes of the missionary himself, a missionary brought closer to the Chinese because he shared with them the common experience of infant mortality, let us look out on Chinese city life and the openings that can be made for evangelism. The following extracts are from " Monthly Notes," supplied by W.H.A., and from them we learn of a spiritual ambition which is content with nothing less than that a " whole city may be shaken."

December, 1903.—" The past month has been a busy one and has, I trust, been a time of blessing. We have made several special efforts in evangelistic work ; amongst others, one to reach the business men of the city, sending out special invitations to them. The result was a gathering of about 300 men, who listened most attentively to Gospel addresses, and I trust that this is only the first step towards leading many of these men to the Saviour.

" There are many tokens of coming blessing : amongst others, a very marked interest in the Gospel preached in the street chapel, which is filled with a really eager audience at night time. Then, too, we are getting fresh openings in the country, and shall probably shortly increase the number of our outstations.

" I received eleven men as catechumens here a fortnight since, and there are others still waiting to be received.

" We hope, D.V., to have a fortnight's special evangelistic mission at the commencement of the Chinese New Year, and should be most thankful for your prayers for this effort, that the whole city may be shaken."

Later in that same month he reports, " One day I baptized eighteen men, thus making thirty-four for the two Sundays (the first sixteen being city people, and the eighteen country folk)."

In August, 1904, Mr. Aldis writes : " We are face to face with a terrible famine. No rain has fallen for weeks—nothing but blazing sun and dry hot winds. The rice, sweet-potato, maize, etc., are all dying or dead, and the prospects are really very serious. We should much value prayer about this—(1) That we may be enabled to help some of the sufferers later on ; (2) that the people may be kept quiet ; and (3) that in some way this may turn out for the extension of God's Kingdom."

Mrs. Aldis recalls that this was a common experience. Every spring time missionaries were aware of a similar sense of tension, if no rain had fallen at the time when the rice was due to be planted. Every misfortune or calamity was at once blamed on the " foreign devils." But this request for prayer referred to a worse famine than had been known in the area for years, with " every day a scorching sun and high burning wind."

Writing in December, 1904, Mr. Aldis says : " I have much pleasure in sending you the accompanying notes of fifty-five baptisms which took place here on Christmas Day. We held meetings for the four days preceding, and they proved to be times of great blessing. . . . I felt every confidence in baptizing those chosen. Some of the testimonies given were very bright and real. This is by far the largest number baptized at one time in this station, and I suppose in this district, and we do praise God for this joy at the close of the year."

These were strenuous years, and in them doubtless Mrs. Aldis learned that habit of cheerful giving which enabled her husband to be often on the road. She it was, however, who acted also as a powerful magnet drawing him back again. The going out and the speedy coming in were to mark their ungrudging service of their Saviour for many and many a year. Of the itinerant missionary a colleague informs us that " in visiting distant stations for which he was parochially responsible, he always went on foot. He was a speedy walker, his one object being to reach his destination quickly, fulfil his duties, and return with equal speed to his own centre. To visit a number of markets doing the slower pioneer evangelistic work was not his forte, his many remarkable gifts lying in other directions."

Being minded himself to go afoot, like St. Paul, he could report, " I have just finished a walk of nearly a hundred *li* round our outstations and to Kuangyuen. I had the joy of baptizing nineteen men and women on the journey, and found much to praise God for in the work."

In August of 1905 he wrote : " We opened a new outstation last Sunday, 90 *li* from Paoning, and had an attendance of eighty people.

The prospects there are very bright. Every Sunday there is an average attendance of about six hundred people on our six little outstations, all quite country places, and not near any big markets." After which comes the characteristic closing sentence : " We need the Holy Spirit in convicting power on all these people, and for this we pray continually."

The month of that report brought a great enrichment of the home in Paoning, for then Gordon Aldis was born. The schoolmaster who " fathered " homesick boys at boarding school was to have a chum, one whom he was proudly to watch follow in the missionary succession. For the brave and devoted mother there now began a new preoccupation and a task which reached fruition across the years when three sons valiant in the faith were given to the Cause of God. What sacrifice and toil the happy parents were to encounter as time unrolled, they hardly guessed that August, yet deep in their hearts lay a conviction that within the circle of their family would be found no small part of their contribution to the Redeemer's Kingdom. Busy and active as he ever was, W. H. Aldis had never reason to reproach himself, as many Christian workers have, or to say, " Mine own vineyard have I not kept."

A family gives hostages to fortune, and a missionary's family is like an extended battle-front, open to enemy penetration. Remembering this, we see a deeper meaning in a colleague's tribute when he wrote : " Our brother knew something of the waves of sorrow and affliction, and the many frustrations and trials of missionary life, but he never deviated from the path of duty and service. He was never happy unless firmly engaged in the Lord's service. His capacity for work was exceptional, and procrastination was quite foreign to his nature."

Thus it was that in labours more abundant both wife and husband unsparingly spent their days. Around Christmas it was a plan dear to Mr. Aldis's heart to collect for four days of special meetings some particular group. In December of 1905 he gathered seventy and more catechumens for intensive work in the Gospel, and reported thus : " The Lord was present in power, and we had some blessed meetings. The subjects considered amongst others were, 'What we *were*', 'What we *are*', and 'How was this change wrought ?' On Christmas Day I had the joy of baptizing sixty men and women. It was a glorious sight and a great privilege."

After another year of fruitful toil, on 29th December, 1906, the little missionary family set sail for furlough in England.

5

Revival and Revolution

THE year 1907 was spent in England, but furlough was prolonged into the following year until medical opinion about Mrs. Aldis's fitness to return to China was more reassuring. Being by this time himself a father, with an only son, William Aldis received a new insight into what it had cost his father to part with him when he went to China. Uncertainty about the future way had doubtless caused him to travel in thought along some unexpected avenues, and he once felt led to ask his father quite plainly, " Ought I to stay at home for your sake ? The years have increased upon you, and a further term of ten years in China may mean that I am not by your side when you need me." The father's answer was, " No, I have given you up to the Lord, and you are His. I would not have you look back."

A family photograph was taken, and with the perception he had gained of the part that parents play when God calls anyone to be a missionary, William wrote an inscription on his father's copy of the family group in these words : " Because thou . . . hast not withheld thy son, thine only son . . . in blessing I will bless thee." (Genesis 22.)

The furlough in the homeland had been occupied not only in deputation work (and the latter included the C.I.M. Annual Meeting, held for the last time in the Exeter Hall), but in a curacy at Southsea. Then, with their son, they set sail again in late summer of 1908. It was the last farewell taken of Mr. Aldis's father.

Back in Paoning, Mr. and Mrs. Aldis, seasoned workers as they now were, had arrived with a deepened longing that their new term of service should somehow be marked by Divine power and reality. No mere routine ministry would justify their having left England and travelled so far. A hunger for blessing on a greater scale was in their hearts, and abundantly shared by their colleagues. A remarkable band of women had answered the call of God and were stationed at various places around Paoning, and these had of late been stirred to persistent and prevailing prayer. The Welsh revival of 1904 had reverberated around the world. When reports from India and Korea indicated that similar movings of the Spirit of God had been experienced in places of such diverse character, missionaries everywhere

began to measure the quality of their converts by a new standard. Through the years 1906 and onwards there is evidence of heightened expectancy through every issue of *China's Millions*.

The inveterate Chinese (and human) tendency to save "face" indicated a desire to stand well with neighbours rather than to please God. The relapse of some Church members into opium-smoking, the acquiescence of Christians in marriages and family ceremonies of a compromising nature, the temptation to blur the outlines and obscure the distinctiveness of their Christian witness and yield to the pull of the world, the flesh and the devil—these made it imperative that in a rapidly expanding Church there should be a work of cleansing and quickening from on high. It was essential that all who claimed to have been born from above should bear the marks of their heavenly birth. Some unequivocal testimony must be borne to the Church as Christ's new creation.

Less and less could missionaries be content merely to keep things going. The regular Church services and classes for Christian instruction, the pastoral supervision and preparation of catechumens, became almost burdensome by reason of an insistent heartache for something more. "For this we pray continually," wrote W.H.A. It had become prayer without ceasing, and as the hunger grew, colleagues were brought into more complete accord. One thing they were asking of the Lord, and that they were determined to seek after, revival in the Church.

It was not that they lacked Chinese converts who had travelled far. Nay, they had an overmastering conviction that those who have travelled far will be quick to realize how much further they have to go. "To him that *hath* shall be given."

In the Church of Paoning there was, for instance, a remarkable man. Born of Mohammedan parents and with long Mohammedan ancestry Mr. Koo was a capable business man, and of outstanding intellectual gifts. When the missionaries in the earliest beginnings of their work had met with difficulty in securing a foothold in the conservative and anti-foreign city of Paoning, it was eventually in the compound of the Ku family, outside the city walls, that they secured two or three rooms. At that time, a dozen years before W.H.A. reached the place, there was a little boy aged seven living with his grandmother and mother and sister in their part of the compound. He loved to play with the six children, all boys, of the Rev. E. O. Williams. From play in childhood the lad was led into fellowship in deeper things. He never attended a Mohammedan

school, but only the mission school, and this though he had been a convinced Moslem. Spiritually he was always above the average, and when he began to give addresses, he early evinced an unusual capacity for illustration, for the apt use of popular proverbs, and the quoting of Chinese classics to enforce his setting forth of the Gospel. Such presentation quickly gained for him a large hearing.

He was one of the original seven catechists who were set apart in 1900. His street-preaching developed and became so effective that five or six Mohammedans in the city were converted. Much gainsaying was therefore provoked among the "faithful," and to answer their attacks on the truth Ku was impelled to do a bold thing. After the manner of Luther, he nailed a thesis to the city gate. The East Gate was just the place where Moslems were wont to congregate in clusters, and often they had stood smoking their pipes while he, in the neighbouring street chapel, was proclaiming the Gospel.

The challenge demanded a reply, and his opponents nailed theirs to the gate. By common consent, however, the Christian had much the better of the argument, and the buzz of popular talk in his praise might well have caused him bodily danger, for the Moslems of Paoning were a turbulent lot, with quite a few desperadoes among them.

Tall, refined-looking, courteous, with pleasing manners, and incisive intellect, such was the colleague and constant associate of W. H. Aldis, a man who was an obvious choice as the first Chinese to be ordained Deacon. His ordination as Deacon in 1904 had been to Bishop Cassels and his Assistant Superintendent a deep joy, and in 1906 he went on to be ordained Presbyter. W.H.A. wrote, "his conversion and call to the ministry is another of those many instances of God's wonderful working, and an illustration of the many influences and forces brought into play for the conversion and consecration of one soul."

Able and fearless as the skilful preacher was, one thing he lacked. After the death of his first wife, Mr. Ku married again, and the marriage he accepted was one arranged by his old grandmother, to a woman not truly converted, but merely enrolled as an enquirer, and by no means of one heart and mind with him. Not having sought counsel at the mouth of the Lord, he lived to regret his carelessness, and when God searched and refined him in the revival fires of 1910, with tears streaming down his cheeks he confessed before his assembled people : "I have set you a bad example. You have the right to point the finger at me."

This was the man whose spiritual growth was of such moment in the eyes of his English colleage, for, said Mr. Aldis, " We had a great deal of intercourse : we were as brothers. There was nothing that he did not tell me." There had been a small amount of money which caused disquiet of conscience, and he brought the sum to Mr. Aldis, obviously broken down about it as only one rigidly honest could be. Such was the light of God that shone into Chinese hearts in the great days of revival. The Chinese pastor is a sample of the refining fire that went through many Christians.

The account is best given in Mr. Aldis's own words. " Revival gave us a new Church. In the year 1910 there swept over the district a great wave of revival from God Himself which came in answer to months, or I may even say years, of prayer for this one purpose. The immediate instruments used by God to promote revival were Mr. Lutley and his Chinese colleague Mr. Wang, from the province of Shansi . . . There are individuals in our Churches today who at that time had their first intimate knowledge of God in His holiness and love, and who for the first time realized the hatefulness of sin. There are others who then for the first time realized their responsibility towards their fellow-countrymen and heard the call of God to preach the Gospel to their own people. I think with joy of my own Chinese colleague, who was led by the Cross of Christ to make humble confession of failures in his past service, and to reconsecrate himself to God. And I thank God that that man has gone on progressing in the knowledge of God, and in devoted service to the Lord Jesus Christ."

What he witnessed left an ineffaceable impression on his soul. At Keswick, on his first appearance as a speaker there, he recounted the experience, declaring that then the holiness of God had been burned into his soul. What had come he described as " a deep spiritual blessing, a real breaking down wrought by the Holy Ghost."

Mr. Wang, in the part he played in the meetings, was notable for his unobtrusiveness, his unassuming and quiet manner. At Pachow, which he and Mr. Aldis visited for three days, there was real power in the midst from the very first. At the evening meeting, one of the Christians was engaged in reading the Scriptures (the story of the Crucifixion in St. Luke 23) when " the power of God fell. All over the Church there were people on their faces, weeping. Everywhere there took place a quiet outpouring of heart in prayer and confession of sin. No address was given that evening. The issues were taken out of human hands altogether. The Spirit of God was at work."

This deep sense of God's presence continued for three days, and at times Mr. Wang spoke, and was helpful, yet what was being done did not depend on him. After the funeral of a child, which Mr. Aldis conducted amid an awed and moved assemblage, the two missioners were obliged to leave Pachow, but the Christians decided that the meetings must go on. Back they went into the Church. No one occupied a seat at the front ; no one would presume to preside, so awed with the sense of God's presence was the Church. Mr. Liao, the evangelist of the town, sat a little back from the front. All the people knelt, and Mr. Liao was bowed before God. Presently he prayed, and then he began to read a hymn : " There were ninety and nine." It was not well known, so he read it out line by line, saying a few words of explanation here and there, after which the hymn was sung. Before the hymn could be sung through, Christians were melted under a sense of the love of God. There was weeping, confession, prayer and praise. It was as though a great wave of power had caught and carried them into a new life.

For three more days the meetings went on in Pachow, and what had been witnessed there was occurring also in Paoning. Looking back with affection to the old Church building, W.H.A. declared : " It was a very sacred place to many of us. It witnessed so many baptisms, confirmations and ordinations, and has been the birthplace of so many souls. But it was doubly sacred from the experience of 1910, when the Lord visited us in great power, and when for days it was the scene of weeping over sins committed." He called it " a church whose floor was wet with the tears of a congregation who had seen God."

One aspect of the revival is suggestive of the far reaches of the Holy Spirit's work. The singing of the congregation engaged in worship at Paoning had been thus described some years before : " a great roar of sound in which one could catch fragments of various tunes. There was *great* fervour and *some* music." All the more significant therefore is Mrs. Howard Taylor's record of the worship there when the quickening came. " Such singing there was ! Such holy joy in the Lord ! And the praying, when the Church prayed, was like music, heavenly music, beginning soft and low, and rising to a wonderful sweetness and fullness. No one who has not heard such praying can in the least realize how impressive and beautiful it is. There was not the least disorder. There was no one voice sounding above the others, no discordant or jarring note. Each soul was tuned to the love of God. Each heart was truly in

the presence of God. Each voice was engaged quietly holding communion with God. And the whole volume of sound rose like music from a heavenly orchestra."

" A new Church," that is what the revival yielded, souls builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. In human flesh and visage, God was reflected. In daily walk and conduct Christ was glorified. Then as a tangible outcome of a thankful spirit, the people by their offertories brought gifts so plentifully that by December all the money needed for the building of a new church had been subscribed. " Unworldliness is not emptiness of garners, but the right and noble use of garners filled by God."

To interrupt that project, however, there came with sweeping onrush the news of the Chinese Revolution. The bloodshed of 1900, happily, was not repeated, but consuls, anxious for the safety of the citizens for whom they were responsible, advised evacuation until the ferment should subside. It was the interruption and dislocation consequent upon the Revolution which were most felt, and, once again, Mr. Ku assumed the responsibility of leadership and grew in stature under the ordeal.

Revival and Revolution, these were the outstanding experiences of the eight-year term on which the Aldis family had launched. But there was occurring a silent, inward revolution also, which W.H.A. was not slow to note as a consequence of revival. The spiritual maturing of his dear friend and Chinese colleague began to indicate that growth of an indigenous leadership which missionaries ought to be quick to discern and glad to welcome. Mr. Ku (in 1918 he became archdeacon, and later he was consecrated Bishop of Western China) was a shining example of the Chinese Christian of deep spiritual quality whose emergence in large numbers seemed the goal of the foreign missionary enterprise, as Mr. Aldis viewed it. After that would come a new stage, the commencement of the really effective evangelization of China by men and women of God from among her own sons and daughters.

The concentrated and intensive experience in Paoning, with the flowering of such notable characters as James Yen and Bishop Ku, proved of inestimable worth to W. H. Aldis. Amid revival and revolution, some lessons had been written deep into his mind, so that when he addressed the annual meeting in London in 1917 he added a third " R " to his review of the years, and spoke of the necessity for Reorganization. A new orientation of the work was due, in order to make room for Chinese leadership. He saw beyond

the Mission to the Church of God. The appeal sounded prophetic, and the later years have seen the prophecy fulfilled in Bishop Houghton's able advocacy of the " New Emphasis." By the power of the Holy Spirit men and women are being converted, and many who have been raised and dedicated to the shepherding of the flock of God have the authentic marks of the Lord Jesus in their willingness to lay down their lives for the sheep.

So great and lasting is the illumination of a revival like that in Paoning that no description of it or its consequences can compare with the words of the prophet who wrote that " the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

6

The Mature Worker

THAT we may get a glimpse of him after the year of revival, and see him at work, a mature and trusted senior colleague, wisely guiding younger workers, let us look at W. H. Aldis through the eyes of a new missionary.

The Rev. P. A. Bruce writes : " I first met Mr. Aldis in Shanghai, in December of 1911—Revolution year. He offered to take me up to Szechwan when he could obtain permission to go back. This came about in the following April. I joined his steamer at Anking and went to Wanhsien, then over land to Paoning with him, noticing his never-failing Quiet Times, his politeness and friendliness with Chinese, his knowledge of the origin and growth of the work in each Station, and the warmth of the welcome accorded to him. One thing stands out vividly, so vividly that I think he must have impressed it upon me a number of times to make sure of it getting home : ' Never think of, or refer to, the Chinese workers as your " native agents or helpers," but always allude to them and think of them as your " Chinese fellow-workers and colleagues." Remember some of them were converted before you were born. Always be ready to learn from them and to give them their due place and honour and respect.' This was years ahead of the average missionary attitude of that day.

" Arrived in Paoning, he contrived to get me into School work as the best method of learning and speaking Chinese. Later he took me a three-week trip round the out-stations, and I noticed how greatly he was respected and welcomed. About six months later he sent me out with two experienced colporteurs and two senior School boys on a six weeks' preaching tour. Not long after he arranged for me to act as English Secretary for the Chinese District Council, not, as I discovered later, that he wanted my notes—the Chinese ones were perfectly adequate—but to enable me to concentrate, so as to better understand and appreciate both the Chinese language and the Chinese viewpoint.

" One other memory : I remember an older missionary saying to me one day, ' You know, we get here from Mr. Aldis, both in Chinese and in English, the type of message we hear in the Convention Tent at Keswick.'

" When Bishop Cassels passed away, one of the first remarks I heard from the Chinese was, ' Now we must send for Mr. Aldis,' although by that time Mr. Aldis had been absent from Szechwan nine years.

" I know this, that my tendency to British superiority was by him very effectively checked, and the happy relationship I later experienced with Chinese School Staff and Church Fellow-Workers was very largely due to the wise training and leadership he gave me in those early days."

Of the Revolution of 1911 little need here be said. It has already become evident that in the life of a missionary in China, incidents and events and evacuations chase each other across the horizon like clouds in an April sky. Evacuation of the Szechwan missionaries to the coast was repeated and once again on the way back to Szechwan there took place an experience of perils in swift rivers which made W. H. Aldis seem as one destined to have the best " watermark " on him.

Of this adventure Mrs. Aldis writes, " I could, of course, tell you more stories of what happened to us, and how the Lord took care of us and saved us from certain death at different times . . . However, I will tell you one very remarkable deliverance from death my dear husband had. On our way back to Szechwan after the Revolution and my illness and my sister-in-law's death in Chefoo, we had to take the journey up the Yangtse gorges by house boat, which was then the only way. It usually took anything from a month to six weeks, according to the state of the river. We had left Gordon at Chefoo but had Arnold with us. Brian was not born then. We also had another lady travelling with us on our boat. Dr. and Mrs. Clarke and their family were travelling in another houseboat also going to Paoning, so we tried to keep the two boats together as much as possible, and always sought to tie up for the night side by side at the bank so as to be able to cross to each other's boat for prayer and fellowship in the evening.

" One night we had tied up, and I was just putting Arnold to bed and preparing the supper, when my husband came to me and said, ' I'm just going over to Dr. Clarke's boat. He wants to ask me something. I shall not be many minutes.' I said, ' All right. Don't be long, because supper will be ready soon.'

" I got supper ready and waited for some time, but he did not come. At last I went to the side of the boat and called out to ask what had happened to keep him so long, and Dr. Clarke came out

and said *he had not come across*, and they were wondering why. It had been nearly dark when he left, and no one had seen him cross over. He had just vanished. It was a mercy for me that I had waited so long before enquiring, or I should have been panic-stricken when I found him gone. But the suspense and terror only lasted a short time, for in a few minutes my dear one clambered over from the bank in his dripping clothes. He had fallen between the two boats through treading on one of the oars instead of the boat itself, and no one had seen him fall.

" The tide there was very swift, and he was carried very far down the river before he could swim to the bank. It was nearly dark. There were no boats at hand, and no one who could help him. But the Lord enabled him to swim to a part of the bank that was climbable, and he managed to get hold of something from the side of the bank and climb up. Then, of course, he had to walk back to the boat in his wet clothes which took some time. But you can imagine the thankfulness and praise in our evening worship that night. It was indeed nothing short of a miracle, because in so many places where we tied up at night the banks were precipitous and afforded no chance for climbing. Had the accident happened at such a place, we would never have known what had happened to him."

The busy years passed, and while turmoil increased in China and war-clouds darkened over Europe, the Paoning missionaries pressed on with their task, and the household was increased. An evangelist who was called the Moody of China conducted a memorable mission attended by remarkable blessing, and still the dear old church was used. It had proved the gate of heaven to very many, and was hallowed by memories of tears and confessions and the manifested glory of God. It was not until December of 1915 that the dedication of the new cathedral could take place, and even when Bishop Roots came for the ceremony, it was still in a very unfinished state.

War in Europe was a source of complications, and reduced the missionary staff. But no outward calm seems necessary for Christ's working, and amid conditions of unrest He was to be seen steadily building His Church.

To indicate the conditions of ferment and ceaseless disquiet in which the missionaries' work had to be done in the new China, two extracts from *China's Millions* of the year 1916 will suffice They are from the August and December numbers.

" A letter from Szechwan tells us that the city of Paoning was under fire by soldiers from Shunking on May 24th. All the officials

and others took refuge in the Mission Compound. The attackers were on the other side of the river and demanded impossible terms from the city. At the time the letter was written, Bishop Cassels and Mr. Aldis were about to attempt to gain an interview with the leaders and obtain more reasonable terms."

" Although unrest has more or less continued in China since the outbreak of the Revolution in the autumn of 1911, it appears probable that at no period during these last few years has the Province of Szechwan experienced such turmoil as during recent months. During the past summer no fewer than seven or eight big armies with their respective generals, each somewhat independent, have held different sections of that large Province. Nominally there have been five different Governors in as many weeks, and each Governor's proclamation has had little or no authority beyond the capital itself. Every country town and market village has been almost a law unto itself. Happily foreigners have been regarded as a privileged class . . . In spite of all this disorder tidings from the stations speak of great opportunities for preaching the Gospel, and of much progress in the work."

The strain of his arduous journeyings and overwork in a busy diocese were writing their marks on the beloved Bishop Cassels, and he came to regard Mr. Aldis as his " right-hand man," brilliant and indispensable. He had developed rapidly as an administrator, and the tired diocesan must often have comforted himself with the thought that there was one so competent and so well loved who would follow him and have charge of the wide-spreading work.

After a full and momentous term of service, Mr. and Mrs. Aldis, with a family of three boys, set off late in 1916 for furlough in the homeland. The special four days of services before Christmas which had always been a feature in Paoning would soon be due, but those conducted by Bishop Roots in the previous year were the last Mr. Aldis was destined to attend. The medical opinion was still veiled in the future but the matured powers of Mr. Aldis were to find their exercise henceforward not in Szechwan but in England.

Of the difficulties missionary parents experience in getting their children settled into suitable schools, Mr. and Mrs. Aldis had their full share. It would take a long chapter to chronicle the plannings and hopings and heart-searchings which marked the long months until the education was completed and the parents' minds at rest, but one missionary parent may be quoted, who remarked : " When my wife and I are tempted to suppose we shall never survive the

ordeal, I bid my wife recall the happy brow of Mr. Aldis, shining and serene."

The first opening for work in England came with a curacy at Iver, under the Rev. Walter Gilliat. Eighteen happy months were spent in this Buckinghamshire village, but when the family's non-return to China became certain, it was evident that Mr. Aldis must be secured for the Mission's headquarters, so that his continued services might be laid under contribution. Dr. Stuart Holden was the Home Director, a man of unbounded charm and drive whose wonderful gifts found great scope in St. Paul's Church, Portman Square, and at the Keswick Convention. The assistance at Newington Green of one with such intimate knowledge of China and its problems meant a great deal to Dr. Holden, and the energetic Secretary threw himself into the work of the Youth Department eagerly. Being a Joseph, a fruitful bough whose branches would grow over any wall, Mr. Aldis added to his duties in 1919 those of curate to Dr. Holden. To a missionary's daughter, he sometimes used to say on the way home from Portman Square, "After listening to Stuart Holden's eloquence, I don't feel I can ever try to preach again."

Hardly anywhere could a missionary settling in England have found more significant contacts in evangelical life than these twin appointments offered W. H. Aldis as he reached his prime. When in 1929 Dr. Holden relinquished the post of Home Director, Mr. Aldis became the first to hold that office as a whole-time appointment.

7

Vision for Youth

TWO notable events mark the year 1929. In that year Mr. Aldis became Home Director of the C.I.M., and under the same date the great forward movement—the appeal for two hundred more missionaries within two years—was launched.

The previous year (1928) had been marked by a large evacuation of missionaries from the interior of China. A considerable number of these were gathered in conference at the coast, and probably the germ of the forward movement lies back in that time of prayer and yearning for greater access to China and for the planting of the Gospel more effectually throughout the length and breadth of the land. As the needs were estimated and the unfinished task examined, it was decided that 199 more missionaries were needed if the task was to be done.

True to the faith of Hudson Taylor, who had stated that " God always seems to bless us when we plan some forward movement," Mr. Hoste in China rose to the idea, and Mr. Aldis at home caught the fire of it. The call to prayer for 200 new missionaries in two years was issued by the Mission Executive in Shanghai. The impression to be gathered from copies of *China's Millions*, and the reports of Valedictory and Annual Meetings, is unmistakeably that the heart which carried the fire and remained undaunted (yea, ever more firmly convinced and fully assured), was the heart of the Home Director. It was he who was charged with the responsibility of making the vision become an actuality, and never was a charge more whole-heartedly accepted.

He confronted the difficulties and boldly proclaimed that one chief feature of the enterprise would be its costliness. He fearlessly said that the way forward would be through peril, toil and pain. To take the least item of the cost, namely, the financial, he envisaged an expenditure which would require an increased income of £25,000 per annum. Visionary, did it seem ? Then Mr. Aldis met misgiving and prejudice with fact and divine promise and argument. He made the difficulties and adverse factors contribute to his cause and reinforce his argument. For example, an informal gathering for clergy and ministers preceded the Valedictory Meeting held in the Central Hall, Westminster, when the first batch of candidates belonging to the 200 was farewelled, on 5th September, 1929 (the eve of his own de-

parture for North America), the purpose of which was to meet squarely and answer plainly such questions as these : " Is it not a fact that the foreign missionary is no longer welcome in China ? Is not the evangelization of the land already complete ? "

The falsity of this view of the situation was exposed. It was shown that no fewer than 333 counties in China proper were still entirely without Christian witness, while the forces at work in Sinkiang, Mongolia and on the Tibetan border were pitifully inadequate, and Manchuria with its 128 counties had ninety-nine of them still unoccupied for Christ. Other questions in the minds of some were these : " Is such an advance as this possible in these days ? When China is in such a chaotic condition, is it advisable to send out new missionaries ? Would it not be a wiser policy to seek to conserve what has already been accomplished, and wait ? Is it not running too great a risk to send young people to China in such perilous times ? Would it not be almost impossible in these days of financial stress to secure adequate support for all these additional missionaries ? "

Writing and speaking with unquenchable zeal, concerned to achieve the effectual evangelization of China within a generation, the Home Director never flagged. His was a deepening conviction that God's time for advance had come. It was his faith which carried the enterprise through when hindrances increased and evidence multiplied that the opposition of the adversary had been aroused. At the sunny age of sixty, Mr. Aldis threw all his energies into the crusade with the ardour and abandonment of youth. And when at length, on the last day of 1931 the group completing the Two Hundred sailed, there was a characteristic outburst of praise when the Home Director started his aticle for *China's Millions* with the words, " God has done it ! "

His own eldest son, Gordon, after graduating at Oxford, had been among a party of thirty recruits which set sail in September. Nineteen men had gone in one ship, the largest number of men ever sent out by the C.I.M. at one time. An element of breathlessness is in the records when we read them, even after the lapse of years. As we look back, it may seem, indeed, as if there are evidences of undue haste in some of the arrangements made : too great concern, perhaps, to keep to the time schedule. If it was so, we can understand the action taken from the context of the Home Director's mind. At his first attendance at Keswick Convention as a young missionary candidate, Mr. Aldis had listened to, or certainly from

his companions had heard of, an address by the Rev. G. H. C. Macgregor on that word in Jeremiah 48 verse 10 (marg.) : " Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." It is certain that the message of the passage had entered into his blood, for thoroughness had become the pattern of all his service. W.H.A. seemed to have come into the world in order to say unto Zion, " Let not thy hands be slack," and therefore he feared to find in himself, or in those he was responsible for leading, any tendency to deal with a slack hand.

Thus it had been chiefly his breadth of vision, his ardour of faith, and his flame of conviction which bore the appeal for the Two Hundred onward to its unforgettable consummation. That in itself was an achievement memorable enough to mark out his work as Home Director.

In his work as Secretary for the Youth Department of the Mission from 1919 to 1929, Mr. Aldis had shown that capacity for overcoming obstacles and that same drive which flourished in his prevailing advocacy of the appeal for the Two Hundred. Indeed it would be true to say that his work as Secretary for Youth had paved the way for the success of the great enrolment of recruits from 1929 to 1931. Those who responded were in very many cases young people who during the previous ten years had been drawn, instructed, coached, challenged, fired, through the publicity given to China's need and God's illimitable claim in the magazine *Young China*, or in the annual rallies which he had made such a feature of the work. At these rallies, held each year in January, a thousand young people were brought together for a whole afternoon and evening. A fascinating succession of talks was arranged, missionary exhibits were shown, with tents, booths, and so on, erected in the hall ; and an attractive and somewhat ambitious programme was printed. Every avenue for reaching the imagination and conscience of the young people attached to the Mission was tried—eye-gate as well as ear-gate. Someone has surmised that Mr. Aldis would not in later years have promoted anything quite so impressive and expensive. Yet it was typical of him not to lie quiescent, but to resolve to get things done.

Getting things done involved for himself a great deal of travelling. A considerable amount of personal discomfort was inevitable, yet with unwearied persistence he gave himself to the task of nourishing the Mission's home constituency. Right to the end he took his share of the deputation work which is an integral part of any mission's activity.

Many are the workers on the field today who remember his visit

to their home town and the message he gave there and the interview they had with him afterwards. It was the consuming desire of his heart to see more labourers thrust into God's harvest field, and more prayer-support secured for them when they went down into the fray. Well he knew, having been himself a missionary, with what poignant yearning the Joshuas on the plain of battle plead for the effectual intercession of Christians in the homeland who shall incessantly lift up holy hands as Moses did at Rephidim.

It was through the Youth and Prayer Departments that the candidates were secured, and, when they came, they found in the Home Director a most sympathetic listener. His approach to young people who sought light on the missionary vocation was always patient, courteous, indeed reverential. The aloofness of the official mind was no part of his make-up. Young people found him warm and understanding, yes, admiring, too. They had no difficulty in making him their confidant. He was fatherly, and yet something nearer their age than that, so very much akin did he seem with youth in outlook.

His happiness of outlook amounted to gaiety of heart, and was a wonderful gift from God. Brimming over with merriment, and with a face that lit up into radiance when he laughed, he seemed to young people a striking illustration of how God can be the health of a man's countenance, a glowing health. Yet that spontaneous sense of fun was under control, as the following glimpses of the Home Director, seen through the eyes of a young woman show.

" Some occasions stand out in my mind particularly. First, when I was turned down by the Council, and he called me into the Home Director's office to tell me. He was wonderfully understanding, and did not say a lot of unnecessary words. I felt it terribly just then, and he very wisely went away and left me alone, and then came back and brought me a cup of tea. It was the simple, human, kind action that I shall never forget.

" Then it was he who introduced me to Miss Ruth Paxson. Again it was tea-time at the C.I.M. I saw two ladies I didn't know, and telegraphed a question to him. He came over with his very characteristic laugh, and said, ' That's Miss Ruth Paxson : shall I introduce you ? '

" I answered without much real reverence, ' What ! *the* Miss Paxson ? ' and then he immediately dropped the banter and said, ' Yes (calling me by my Christian name), she is a wonderful Bible teacher. You ought to hear her ! ' The introduction he then made led to a touch that transformed my life.

" Again it was his quick perception of a possibility that nipped my laughter in the bud when it was going to spoil my chance of really receiving help. I don't know whether he was at all conscious of these things : I should hardly think so. He lived near the Lord, and could be led rightly.

" He was so unfailingly cheerful, kind and helpful always, so I am more than glad to have been one of the very many to whom he communicated the steady cheer of a trusting faith."

It was this ability to treat each candidate as an individual soul, this imaginative entering into situations that others are confronting, and this readiness to follow through a ministry to the tested and tried one long after the first pressure or emergency has passed, which two other women candidates gratefully recall. One of them, now in China, writes :

" My principal contact with Mr. Aldis was during the five years I worked at Newington Green prior to coming to China. I started there just before my Father died, and it was after his death that Mr. Aldis came to Newington Green. What he meant in my life during those years is so personal that it is difficult to put into words and could not be of any interest to anyone else. For quite two years after I came to China he wrote me a weekly letter. Busy as he always was he knew what the first few years in this land means to a young worker, and he wrote regularly, not just a scrappy note, but a long letter and generally enclosed notes of sermons and addresses he had given that week. After that time letters were not quite so frequent, but I always felt so sure of his interest in my affairs and the work I was doing, and we owe much to his prayerful interest all these years. When we met on furlough there was always the same spirit of friendship."

Another lady puts it on record that the Home Director's continuing interest in her, despite innumerable claims on his attention and remembrance, survived her inability to become a missionary. Writing to Mrs. Aldis, she says, " You will no doubt have many letters telling of what your husband has meant to many people. I have known him since I was seventeen years old and was setting my face towards China, and although I never got there, your husband never lost touch. So often was he a help and inspiration to me. My husband and I are proud and thankful that he spoke at our wedding, dedicated our precious little daughter, and also our home, to the service of God."

The candidates who never sail—what busy Mission administrator

has time to maintain the human touch with them ? It is a revelation of the fullness of grace in God's servant that he should thus be so gratefully remembered. No careless or unsympathetic or forgetful attitude was allowed to engender in unaccepted candidates the despair which concluded that they were no longer " in the fray " or running the race. Like his Master, Who gave thought to Jairus's daughter afterwards and arranged that she should be fed, the servant was never so pre-occupied with great concerns as to omit thoughtfulness about detail. His friendship was given lavishly, and he always had time to be a friend.

It was an inestimable gain to the Mission that its Home Director should thus have the ear of the young. There had therefore been unconscious genius, or the pressure of the higher Hand, in the choice which Mr. Aldis made of the Youth Department as his sphere. That had been back in 1919, and the story has been reversed from the chronological order simply that we may read the supervising and foreseeing wisdom of God, Who made His servant graduate from the best training ground for a future Home Director—the Youth Department.

8

The Human Touch

YET there had been another task for which Mr. Aldis was the man " cut out " when in 1917 and 1918 it became plain, from the family's inability to return to China, that he should be secured for the administrative side of the Mission's work at home. The genius of the C.I.M., however immense its scope, lies in the fact that the Mission is not an organization, but a family. That was a feature of which W.H.A. was proud. And as Home Director he maintained that personal touch, at once brotherly and fatherly, which keeps relationships warm with rich humanity.

When Mr. Aldis became Home Director, the missionaries felt that here was one of themselves, one who possessed an insight into their problems and pressures and needs. Most gladly did he become their trusted friend when it fell to him to recast what had been left on a rather vague basis of fatherly benevolence—the Mission's responsibility for its retired workers. This he sought to shape by principle. " If old missionaries need a home, we shall provide it "—such was the previous outlook, and it seemed sound enough. But not all retired missionaries are vocal, and because they said nothing, some were wronged by being left out.

Mr. Aldis accepted the task of putting on a regular basis what had merely " come into being " or " developed." In his hands the organization of the matter was worked out, leaving nothing to chance. Rental allowances were fixed. In addition to this, he propounded an arrangement whereby there should be made to missionary parents definite children's allowances, and grants to meet the fees of children at school. He argued that the existence of the school at Chefoo for missionaries' children was a proof that the Mission accepted responsibility for the education of its missionaries' families, and therefore the organization of that side of things under the different conditions of the home country ought to be correspondingly clear, and based on thought-out propositions.

A colleague of those days expresses the opinion that in one application of his principles Aldis may have been mistaken. A man accustomed to such quick decisions as he was may have fastened too quickly on a principle, without due recognition of a different point of view. The issue in question was the bearing of the above super-

annuation scheme and rental allowances on those missionaries who had some private means. The Home Director held that such missionaries in their dealings with the Mission ought to declare their private means. Others considered that the Mission should be more trusting towards its missionaries, and ought to recognize that in such cases there were often special obligations. If in this matter Mr. Aldis erred, it was his own clear-cut abandonment to God in faith and his entire freedom from financial entanglement which shaped his conviction.

At the C.I.M. Annual Meeting in 1917, soon after his return from China, he had spoken on "Revival, Revolution, and Reorganization." After dealing with the first and second he proceeded, "The third new thing that God has done for us is Reorganization. He has given us a new sense of responsibility. Now we know perfectly well that organization apart from God is worse than failure. But organization, if it is vivified by the power and the presence of the Holy Ghost, will make for efficiency." And just as he rejoiced in the development of co-operation with the Chinese, and the new organization which had the Chinese Church in view, and not the foreign missionary, so he put his hand to a task in his days as Home Director which took away an element of the haphazard from the care bestowed on the Mission's retired workers, and the attention given to the education of missionaries' children.

The quality of a mission's leader is an all-important thing, and it was the personal touch which Mr. Aldis had with individual missionaries which enabled him to carry through reorganization while still retaining the spirit of a family. He succeeded so well that even those who at one time were insistent in their plea to Mr. Hoste that Mr. Aldis was the obvious man to succeed him on the field as General Director, were brought in later days to realize that Mr. Hoste was right in claiming that Mr. Aldis was indispensable at the Home end of affairs.

One other thing which a Home Director should do is to inspire confidence among older people, those, for example, who desire to be sure that they are investing to the best purpose the legacy or tithe which they have prayed over and are planning to donate. It is amazing to discover how many people made Mr. Aldis their confidant. Correspondence or interviews with people of this latter class who sought his guidance always left an impression of the Home Director's disinterested honesty, and of his concern that only God's will should be done. He would not so much tell them what to do as

pray with them so that they might find out what God wanted them to do.

The friendly geniality of the man and his quick helpfulness appear in one instance which will suffice to awaken countless memories of similar acts and words which were apt and full of grace.

A friend relates how, late in life, Mr. Aldis, having preached for him at the morning service and then helped with the midday Communion, arrived with him at the vicarage, and found dinner all ready on the table. Grace was said, and they started on the meal before one of the boys exclaimed that there were no dinner napkins on the table. The vicar's wife jumped up, went to the sideboard and took a few out of the drawer, then handed one to Mr. Aldis. He opened it, and, to his hostess's dismay, it had three large holes newly made at the laundry. Full of apology, the hostess asked that she might exchange it, but with rare graciousness the guest looked up and said, " Please let me keep it : it makes me feel at home ! " It was like him thus exquisitely to put someone else at her ease while drawing a hearty laugh from all.

The many-sidedness of the Home Director and his care for the homeliest details in the lives of others—how frequently it is mentioned with gratitude by missionaries ! He was privileged to be admitted to the inner circle of countless families and the privilege was his because so many husbands and wives joyously felt that he belonged to their family. Let a C.I.M. missionary from Melbourne, and his wife after him, tell how natural the process was.

" As an Australian travelling to England I was looking forward with eager anticipation to my first visit to the Mother Country. To the romance of early spring travel up the Rhône Valley was added next day the green and pleasant land of Kent. If it seemed all but a happy dream there was a rude awakening on arrival at Victoria, for on that drab Saturday afternoon there was no one to meet me. While I was trying to telephone relatives my wife found me, and the world stood still just for us two.

" Then to my amazement someone else appeared to welcome me —a middle-aged clergyman of medium height and robust build with a quick, brisk step, a warm handshake, and a smiling face which fairly radiated health and goodwill. It was Mr. Aldis.

" To this day I can recall the pleasurable shock of that second welcome. To think that he, the busy home director of a large missionary society, should have spent an hour or two of his time—and that on a Saturday afternoon—to hunt out and greet an incon-

spicuous visitor from the Antipodes ! I was at once amazed, humbled and delighted.

" A few brief words of welcome in that deep, cheerful voice, another hearty handclasp, and he was off on some other errand. But it was not the last we were to see of that busy little car and its owner. Whether it was an evening drive through London streets to a Chinese dinner in Piccadilly, or a longer run down to Kew and a ramble through the famous Gardens, Mr. Aldis and his car seemed somehow to have time to spare for us . . .

" And the end of our acquaintance was like the beginning. Ten years had gone by since that memorable day, and now again I was in London just ready to hand over office duties at headquarters before leaving with my family for Australia on the way back to the mission-field.

" And there just ' by heavenly chance express ' came Mr. Aldis again on one of his infrequent visits to Newington Green from his well-earned retirement in Kent. I can still see him sitting in his friendly way on the corner of the office desk as he dropped in for a few cheerful words and a last good-bye.

" But I was wrong ; it was not the end of our acquaintance, and it was not a final good-bye. Some day we shall see that beloved friend again, and there will be all eternity to talk over the brief story of earth's pilgrimage, and to render thanks to the Giver of all good gifts, especially the priceless gift of such a friend as W. H. Aldis."

To this tribute the missionary's wife adds her experience of that furlough from an intimate, domestic angle :

" World War II had just finished, and we were home on our second furlough. With grateful hearts for God's provision we took our four children down to the C.I.M. Châlet at Bidborough near Tunbridge Wells for three wonderful weeks of holiday.

" We had corresponded with Mr. Aldis about the details of our stay, and there on arrival at Tonbridge station was the well-loved figure in the little car. Soon he had packed us in, and we were driving through winding tree-lined roads to the picturesque house at the end of the village.

" The preparations dear Mr. Aldis had made for our arrival truly amazed and humbled us. A week's ' emergency rations ' were stacked in the kitchen, bought at his own store in his own good name —it *must* have been a good name, for our six emergency cards had not reached him, and the local store refused to serve us. Bread,

milk and vegetables were all there, and there were even flowers from his own garden in the vases. Everything had been carefully remembered, even to the kettle simmering gently on the stove ! And yet after all that it was quite a work of art to persuade our gracious friend to stay for the tea which by his forethought was ready in a few minutes.

" As the days passed and we were blessed with his frequent visits I told Mr. Aldis that he would soon be putting on weight, according to the promise that ' the liberal soul shall be made fat.' But in all truth he kept so busy doing good deeds that he had little time to grow stout. He seemed delighted to be at the service of the Christian folk of the district. ' Here's Mr. Aldis,' our eldest girl exclaimed excitedly one afternoon, ' and he's got his Sunday clothes on.' Sure enough he had been visiting a somewhat ' high ' churchman, and had accordingly donned clerical attire. But if by doing so he had created the right atmosphere for his sick visitation he was equally delighted with the interest aroused in our children by his change to formal dress.

" Nor can I forget his remarkable attention to personal details. Keswick Convention meetings were being held in Westminster Chapel that summer, and it was my turn to go up from Southend to spend the day at those inspiring gatherings.

" Between the morning and afternoon meetings I happened to be passing a local restaurant just as Mr. Aldis and several of the speakers came from the opposite direction.

" A friendly smile of greeting was insufficient from Mr. Aldis. No, he must for a moment disengage himself from that awe-inspiring group to enquire whether I had had my lunch ? Yes, I had. But how like Mr. Aldis was that little incident ! "

From China come the following memories sent by a missionary : " After I was accepted by the Mission in 1929 I had an interview with Mr. Aldis, and in the course of conversation asked his advice on the kind of books which would be suitable for me in China. I had spoken of the works of eminent theologians which I possessed, and he knew my propensity for heavy theological literature. ' Shall I take these ? ' I asked him. He looked at me with a smile all over his face and with a merry twinkle in his eye, and said in no uncertain tones, ' Take *Punch* ! '

" During my first furlough while staying at Newington Green I saw a lone figure walking upon the flat roof of Inglesby House just before noon one day, and it was Mr. Aldis communing with God in

prayer. This deeply impressed me, for the man who advised me to read on occasion some less heavy literature was also a real man of God, a man of prayer. It was these two aspects of his character which made him so approachable.

" On another occasion he was seeking to encourage me in the work, and freely spoke of his own difficulties when in China. Once after labouring for a whole day in a market town preaching the Gospel, he was so overcome with the lack of response that he went outside the town and wept. This profoundly moved me, for here was a man who had tasted the bitterness of apparently fruitless labour, and his words were a great encouragement to me."

To have seen himself depicted as a flawless saint of perfectly crystalline clearness would not have pained W. H. Aldis : it would have amused him. He was of such radiantly sanctified common-sense that he would have supposed it a joke, if he had been capable of believing that he would be depicted at all. God, he well knew, is not glorified when even his best servants are extravagantly praised. Of any record of a human life and character he would have asked concerning its total impression, " Is it convincing ? " He would desire to learn not the theory of any man's sanctification, but how it worked out in practice.

For the above reason, two incidents, otherwise trivial, seem appropriate here. One is furnished by Mrs. Aldis, and the other is conveyed in a letter to Mrs. Aldis written by a young woman missionary, educated at the Chefoo School, to whom Mr. Aldis was a loved father-in-God.

There came a day, not many months before his death, when Mr. Aldis was weary, after a tiring week. With the tiredness there came a vague but heavy sense of loneliness, and he announced to Mrs. Aldis that he thought he would go for a walk. But no, a better thing to do would be to go to the Ideal Homes Exhibition at Olympia ! So off he went. And he came back a new man, for on his way around the Exhibition he met a man who recognized him, and calling back his three boys exclaimed to them, while he addressed himself to Mr. Aldis, " Here is the man who led me to Christ ! " It was the best tonic for a tired saint. Moreover it was a wise saint who knew how to deal with incipient depression.

The passage from the young lady's letter to Mrs. Aldis about Mr. Aldis is as follows : " There is no one to whom I owe a greater debt for all he did for me, helping and advising in so many ways. I'm so glad to have had the memory of this last furlough and all the

happy times when we went to see the primroses, or the autumn tints, or mowed the lawn together at ' Kendal.' I remember meeting him one day in the town when he had a long face, for he had lost his precious sweet ration coupons. Needless to say, I gave him mine ! I feel his Homegoing leaves an awful blank, and can only faintly imagine what it must be to you."

The benefit of Mr. Aldis's drive and wisdom as an administrator became available for other Christian organizations, and it was to be expected that one with such a human touch should be drawn to the art of healing, and to the Missionary School of Medicine.

In the Missionary School of Medicine he took a deep interest as an agency concerned with equipping candidates for effective missionary service. He attended most Council and Committee Meetings, and each year was the Chairman at the Annual Meeting and Prize-giving held at the end of session. As President during thirteen years, he saw three hundred students pass through the School, and go forth to different parts of the world. It was a joy to him to see the School become an established factor in the missionary enterprise. He fostered the inter-denominational and international character of the School, and prayed earnestly and worked very hard for the realization of a cherished ambition—the securing of a hostel so as to gather into one the students scattered throughout London and often living in lodgings. To the students he was without question a father in God. He was strong and tender ; he was faithful and sympathetic, and many are the students in this and kindred schools and missionary training colleges who remember with thankfulness the messages he delivered, and the whole-hearted way in which he joined with them in their seasons of devotion and intercession. His heart always beat in unison with the young, and there was no place in which he would rather join them than at their Prayer Meeting—the place of vision.

9

Pattern of a Balanced Life

IN an unconscious self-portrait—a tribute which W. H. Aldis paid to a friend in a memorial service which he conducted in his later years—he said some things which are revealing in the light which they throw on his own character. He said, " I am very glad to have a share in this service, and to pay a tribute to one who was so deservedly respected and loved. We are not here to indulge in any praise of a man. That would have been distasteful to him of whom we think, for, like all saintly men, he thought very little of himself, and was ever desirous that all praise should be given to the God of all grace.

" But we do desire, and it is right that it should be so, to magnify the grace of God as we have seen it in our brother. Of his early years of ministry I knew little. It was during the war that I got to know him more intimately, and to know him was to love him. These contacts with him left certain indelible impressions on my mind, and I pass them on to you because I think they are a part of the lesson God would teach us from the life of His servant.

" We saw in him (1) *A spirituality which was perfectly natural.* That may seem like a contradiction. There are some who are spoken of as spiritual, but their spirituality seems forced, artificial, unreal, and savours of a pose. There is something which goes by the name of spirituality, yet it repels, and is unattractive.

" It was so perfectly natural for him to speak of the things of God. You instantly felt this was truly a part of the man : there was nothing forced about it. That only comes from dwelling in God. It is only known to those who live in daily communion with God, or who abide in Christ, and that was what —— did.

" The second impression was of *a humour that was perfectly spontaneous.* Everybody knew his humour. Some might criticize it, especially those who know nothing of a sunny sense of humour. He was a humorist, quick and ready, but there was never any venom or sting in his humour. Bishop Taylor Smith's blessing was sometimes heard in this form : ' Peace, purity, love, joy, humour be with you all.'

" Another impression was of *a ministry that was transparently honest.* There was no striving after effect, no seeking to please men,

no preaching beyond the speaker's own experience. One story he told me left a great impression : it illustrated vividly that of which we had been talking together—the danger of mistaking the psychic for the spiritual in the effect of our words upon our hearers.

" When I saw him at work I further noted *an administration which was eminently wise*. When he was called to serve the —— Mission, he was faced with many problems, and we who knew him were impressed with the sanity and wisdom he displayed.

" Moreover we discerned *a character which was peculiarly free from jealousy and unkind criticism*. Pre-eminently he knew how to fulfil that exhortation of the Apostle—' In honour preferring one another.'

" Our brother, using the words of Saint Paul, might have said, ' By the grace of God I am what I am.' It was the grace of God that he magnified, and of himself he would only affirm that he *yielded* to the grace of God. Then he found that grace not only saves, but grace is ' the sum-total of the power of God in Christ ' ; and grace in its working ' enables and ennobles and energizes.' "

Such, gathered from his notebooks, was the portrait that he painted of another man. And such he was himself. It is truly remarked that we appreciate, on the whole, that to which we are ourselves akin, and certainly his many friends will recognize in the qualities that Mr. Aldis admired in another man, the lineaments of the character which under the hand of God had been taking shape within himself.

Of the commanding position which he came to occupy and the deep and affectionate trust which his inspiring leadership drew from countless hearts, the later chapters of this record must speak, but here it seems necessary to dwell rather on the fact that what prepared this man of God for leadership was his great and unfailing and pains-taking genius for proving himself a friend. Leadership came as a result of his tireless, self-consuming, forth-travelling affection, as it went to work on behalf of his friends, first and chiefly in the secret place.

In a drawer of his desk, among several select loose-leaf notebooks of addresses given at funerals or at meetings, there was found another smaller notebook, pocket size. It was bound in black leather, and held the Prayer leaflets of the China Inland Mission, the Scripture Gift Mission, the Egypt General Mission, the Thonon Mission, and the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. The actual pages of the notebook had been systematically worked over

so as to set out under the headings of the seven days of the week all the friends and evangelical causes for which the writer set himself day by day to pray. It seems like holy ground. Turning the many pages, astonished at the number of names, one recalls that entry in David Brainerd's *Journal* which says : " Prayer was so sweet an exercise that I knew not how to cease . . . I could not be content without a very particular mention of a great number of dear friends at the throne of grace."

Likewise this precious book of *Daily Prayer Suggestions* which W. H. Aldis set out for his guidance as an intercessor enables us to realize the mainspring of all his varied activities. To his friends he was an immeasurable inspiration and source of strength, and the secret of his courageous buoyancy and serene wisdom and happy-hearted helpfulness lies between these pages. What he gave to others was drawn from God.

With many otherwise business-like people, prayer is left altogether outside the sphere where their brains operate, but it was characteristic of W.H.A. that his prayer-life should show nothing haphazard. Bringing his best powers to the layout of his time to be spent in communion with God and intercession, he apportioned five pages of the notebook to each day. It looks as though the turning of a leaf meant a new stage reached in his petitions or a fresh focusing of his attention.

While it would be simplest to reproduce the book in its entirety, the sheer detail is so great and the names cover such a multitude that the reader, instead of being helped, might simply feel dazed and conclude that it was of no use trying to follow such a man in the reach of his supplication for others. It will suffice if the outline for Sunday is fully given, with a mere indication of the large number of personal names mentioned, while the other days of the week have their programme summarized.

SUNDAY

Personal

My relations (Names given).
My family (Names of the three generations).
Myself : Health and strength, guidance, power.
Financial provision.

The C.I.M. Home Council (Names).
Ladies' Council (Names).
Scottish and Irish Councils.

The Churches and Ministers known to me (Thirty-one names).
All retired missionaries.
Dwelling-places named, and some former colleagues.

For spiritual revival.
For future nursing home.
For the Missionary Home (Members of staff named).

In the plan for the other days of the week, first comes the intimate circle of the family, and usually a predominating place is given to one son, his particular work and future, or to a daughter-in-law and her friends. Still on that intimate page, there occur from day to day the names of servants of God and their sphere of work : it is an experience that leaves one overawed and ashamed, to note how he was at the back of so many in the responsibilities they faced.

Beyond the immediate circle, a primary place was given always to the major enterprises of the China Inland Mission, so that while one day was set apart for the General Director, the Superintendents and China Council, another to the North American Council, and a third to Chinese Bible Schools, ultimately every aspect of its activities were taken in, from the Diocese and Bishops to the latest new recruits, the Candidates' Committee and the Language Schools. The Theological College at Chungking and Boarding Schools hold an especial place.

The third page on Monday contains " Personal Friends " with fourteen privileged names, and on succeeding days some evangelical enterprise dear to his heart is given extended mention. The Keswick Council and its responsibilities are set out and named, the new speakers come in for particular solicitude, and the Registrar at Keswick is remembered—this on Tuesday ; while Wednesday names the Missionary School of Medicine and Fegan's Homes, making reference to the members of the staff by name. The London Bible College occupies Monday's fourth page, which is typical of the man in that the pivotal persons on the Board of Directors or on the Teaching Faculty are named and their wives also.

Such a galaxy of evangelical enterprise in foreign fields or among youth or in the universities is named on Thursday that it would look to the uninitiated a dazzling array of initials.

An administrator's grasp of detail and a Christian leader's imaginative appreciation of the unheralded, plodding activities of workers " behind the scenes " show in the fifth prayer page, which is occupied with the departments of work at C.I.M. headquarters :

the Prayer Department, or Deputation work, with its outreach to local secretaries and hospitality arrangements ; or the Finance, Editorial, Business and Candidate Training branches of the work.

Another regular feature is adherence to the practice of praying for the provinces of China, three or five daily, with a view to covering the enterprise of all missions and the International Missionary Movement.

Saturday is not taken into the plan like other days, but instead there are two crowded pages entitled, "People to pray for." What is impressive in the thirty-nine groups mentioned is that Mr. Greatheart has leisure of mind to take in so very many friends and their families. Infusing his life's blood into this great task of intercession, he served his own generation according to the will of God. It was his desire to make his influence count, not in the realms of prominence or prestige, but where God is seeking that His servants should prevail.

Leadership, he makes us see, comes to those who have large reserves. Leadership was his because he did not seek it. One of his most radiant characteristics was his humility, but it was bred where his strength was bred also—in communion with God. His friends on the Keswick Council frequently skirmished with him in an eager desire that he should take a more prominent part in the speaking at Keswick. At their unanimous appeal, he would sometimes consent, but often he managed to overrule them and to remain in the background.

When he paid tribute to the friend who was what he was because he dwelt in God, Mr. Aldis mentioned his humour and sanity and wisdom, and in himself the same qualities were delicately compounded. That explains why he was consulted by responsible people at the head of important causes when they needed helpful and sure guidance about principles or about personalities. With wonderful and charitable reserve, he could nevertheless indicate to any who were not blind and deaf whether a certain official to be chosen or a speaker to be invited would prove really helpful to the cause, or a liability and embarrassment. Men of brilliant gifts often err just here : perhaps generosity makes them over-kind, and later their judgment is not to be trusted. In the difficult choices that often have to be made, and in the intricacies of modern Christian warfare, W. H. Aldis was a gift of God by reason of the sanity and balance of his life, and the wisdom of his counsel.

A man who is deeply in earnest requires the added grace of a

frolicsome streak in him, or he may become harsh, self-righteous and controversial. Aldis shrank from controversy. How his sensitive soul could wince when some loud-voiced speaker was riding rough-shod over the susceptibilities of finer souls ! The zealot and the fanatic are oblivious of human feeling and devoid of humour, but this was a man rich both in affection and in fun, a man with an exceptional sense of humour. " Don't we all remember," writes a close friend, " that trick he had of covering the lower part of his face as he gave himself up to the enjoyment of a good joke ? " Anything ludicrous had immense power to amuse him, and after his first explosive laughter he seemed like one who had encountered a difficulty in packing, as though all the gaiety of heart that had come abroad required a good pair of hands to stow it away !

One instance out of scores that could be furnished to illustrate his merry heart is supplied by a former colleague and friend in China. " The writer is endowed with feet of considerable size, and no Chinese shoemaker would believe that shoes of such size were needed by anybody. Because he lived in the country, far from shoe-makers, an order, with an exact size of sole required cut in paper, was sent to Mr. Aldis in the city. The shoes were duly delivered and Mr. Aldis sent them on, enclosing in one shoe a suitable motto : ' Set my feet in a large room.' "

What a delightful companion he was on holiday and among children is evident from letters that refer to his share in the C.S.S.M. " squashes " at Bude, and his weather forecasts, his fondness for a game of tennis, and his rich enjoyment of youth's exuberance. He loved life. Here was some one too sane and wholesome to be " half in love with easeful death." The poise of his soul was a measure of the grace, in the sense of symmetry and beauty of contour, which in him was one aspect of the manifold grace of God.

10

The Flame of the Lord

WILLIAM ALDIS attended the Keswick Convention for the first time in 1897 and for the last time in 1947. Across those fifty years a life-long friend was the Rev. Walter Jennings, who shared a room with him in the C.I.M. house-party of 1897, for both were on the Mission's autumn sailing list. That companion relates how together the friends discussed the propriety of selecting from the daily programme the speakers whom they would specially choose to hear, and moving from tent to pavilion or pavilion to tent accordingly. He adds that " Aldis chose his speakers."

" Under the chairmanship of Mr. Robt. Wilson, assisted by Captain Tottenham, was a remarkable platform of saintly personalities. They included Webb-Peploe, Handley Moule, Elder Cumming, F. B. Meyer, Evan Hopkins, Chas. Inwood, Luce, Macgregor, Macartney (of Melbourne)."

" The models of calm spiritual chairmanship and orderly exposition of Scripture truth with direct appeal to hearers were not without effect upon W. H. Aldis, as witnessed by his subsequent career."

How easy it would be to reconstruct the Keswick scene that year ! There can be little doubt that the young man heard the three moving messages in personal testimony spoken from the inmost heart of Handley Moule, and by Preb. Webb-Peploe, and by Dr. A. T. Pierson.

These three messages are so representative of Keswick's teaching and its experimental nature, and are so typical of what became wrought into the very being of the subject of this memoir, that they furnish us with a key to his character and outlook. They deserve, therefore, to be briefly summarized.

Of Handley Moule it can be truly said that he *was* the Keswick teaching. It is therefore peculiarly appropriate to begin with him, for one hearer of his in that year was to become, in a different way and for a later generation, a similar incarnation of the Convention's message—the subject of this Memoir.

Handley Moule spoke on the words of 2 Cor. 4—" always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," and confessed that he was once puzzled as to what they meant. Then he had enquired of his dear friend, C. A. Fox, a man with inmost qualifications for

being their interpreter. The answer given had proved momentous in the speaker's experience. Mr. Fox said, " When our Lord has anything for us to make a cross of, by putting it across our will, then *to bear about the death process of the Lord Jesus in our body* is just our assent and consent, made and carried on and carried on, to that crucifixion and to the next and to the next, whatever it means." " Assent and assent and assent to the will of God," " our business, remember, being not to inflict the death, but to assent to it."

The poignant experience which Preb. Webb-Peploe narrated was that which he had recounted years before at the Brighton Convention. Over the dead body of his little one, whom he had been laying in the grave that day, he was reading the words, " My grace is sufficient for thee," when his eyes were on a sudden opened to their meaning. " *IS* sufficient," he repeated to himself ! Not a promise, but a present fact ! And the speaker declared that in the accepted fact of Christ's sufficiency he had found through all the intervening years the adequate provision made by God for all his manifold needs.

The third speaker, Dr. Pierson, had referred to the visit of Preb. Webb-Peploe and the Rev. Andrew Murray to America in 1895, and told how they had spoken of the power of God transforming character, and had borne down upon that human unbelief, even in forgiven souls, which acquiesces in the continuance of disposition untransformed. When the speakers had invited any to stand who felt the need of claiming this power, Dr. Pierson, in spite of the humiliation to himself in the place where all knew him, had risen to his feet.

In messages like these, and, still more, in the personalities who conveyed these truths from God, an earnest young candidate saw proof afresh of the searching and cleansing and gracious work of the Holy Spirit of God. The loving relentlessness with which God moves to His chosen goal plainly included a refining, disciplining and expanding work in the souls of men already committed to Him and to His service, and the first impressions made on William Aldis may be discerned for ever afterwards. It may truly be said of him that what he heard is what he became. Others in the years ahead may have given more memorable expression to the teaching of Keswick, but no one was a better exemplification of it. His gift, so to express it, lay not in being an outstanding expositor of Scripture so much as in being one of God's illustrations of the things that are written there.

There is many an echo in the later years of the deep and searching

things which W. H. Aldis heard at Keswick, and one particular word and one practical concern may here be specified. Chronicling the Convention, Evan Hopkins had written : " One prayer was, 'Give us a divine conscience about keeping our time with Thee untouched.' And many will remember and treasure the following : 'Take time for communion : it may not be long, but see that it is *unhurried*, which is quite another thing.' Time will create itself for this, even in the busiest life, if you are set on it, either in quantity, or in the little you can get being so hemmed in by the peace of God that it will do much." In all the councils over which W. H. Aldis presided, planning enterprises for God, it was "*unhurried*" time that was first given to prayer. In his own private life, he ever gave the first and freshest moments of the day to his quiet time.

Whatever crisis had marked his inner life—and it is not given to us to know much—W. H. Aldis did not reckon the momentum of his life to lie in any past experience, but ever sought to maintain living fellowship with God. Crises there must have been, occasions on which he had to reaffirm his faith and renew his former choices, but the impression left by his character is of a robe woven from the top throughout. To use a beautiful antithesis of " crisis and process " of which Evan Hopkins was fond, there had, undoubtedly, been some signal deliverance in W. H. Aldis's experience, some thrilling Red Sea victory chanted with timbrel and song, but what most observers were aware of was the long subsequent life spent in gathering every morning " the silent, ceaseless manna." No one could urge more insistently the necessity at Keswick for a *crisis* : no one's life more clearly illustrates the *process* of abiding in Christ, or of faith continually exercised Godward and expressing itself manwards in works of love. " Keswick " for its beloved chairman was not an isolated mountain-top experience, not a glimpse of heavenly glory obscured anon by cloudwrack, not a dream from which the sleeper awakes to supposed reality. On the contrary, it was the sheer practical bent of his mind, ever drawn to real things, and ever intent on getting things done, which grappled William Aldis to the Keswick message, and made it his life's work in China and in England and beyond the bounds of these lands to authenticate that message to a multitude of other people.

Someone writes, " Once we entertained a Keswick speaker, and a friend who was staying with me said, 'Isn't it a pity we have to know him off the platform?' Later that lady entertained Mr. Aldis and Mr. Funnell and she said, 'It's a privilege to have them under one's roof.'"

W. H. ALDIS

Proposed as a speaker by Dr. Stuart Holden, whose curate he then was, Mr. Aldis first appeared on the Convention platform in 1924. With the omission of only one year—the year 1929, when he requested release, being on the eve of his visit to North America as new Home Director of the C.I.M.—he was a speaker at every Convention held until he died.

The first text from which he gave an address at Keswick was : " I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He said, " In China, many years ago now, there was a church of which I had the privilege and responsibility of being pastor. On one occasion there happened in that church what might happen here today. The whole of the congregation suddenly saw God. I shall never forget it ; I do not want to forget it . . . The whole congregation fell down before God, and the floor of the church was wet with the tears of the congregation who saw God."

The speaker was, like Moses, well-nigh forty when that vision of God's holiness was " burned into his soul," but it became the determining thing in all his later career. With gratitude he once recalled the visit made by Charles Inwood to China as a Keswick deputation, and he had the same unfaltering loyalty to God's high claims as that flame-like Ulsterman. In 1926 he said, " We have not come to Keswick merely to attend the Convention meetings and to feel good, but we have got to deal with secret sins and let the search-light of the living God go right through us." That was a characteristic saying, and indicates the kind of speaker he was. People attending the Convention were not allowed to suppose that they were to be left in gentle and vague reverie. His addresses had none of the polish of the poet or literary craftsman. They were drastic and urgent and searching. He probed. He exposed compromise and slothfulness and half-heartedness and self-deception. The natural sluggishness of mankind and the human proneness to inertia found in him a disturbing speaker.

Someone has described the opening part of an address by Mr. Aldis and the development of his theme afterwards (not at Keswick but on one of his frequent visits to a local convention) in an interesting way. The first impact upon the hearer, he thought, was like that of a chairman addressing a board of directors, indicating to them certain things that must be done. But as the speaker went on with his message, and his personality came more into play, one felt a pervasive warmth. One became aware of a charm and winsome-

ness in the speaker which gave a quite different complexion to his words. The love that shone through all the speaker's being was persuasive and secured the best hearing for his message. It became evident that the speaker was no mere surgeon intent on an operation, but that he had the heart of a nurse, and was deeply concerned about the after-care of the patient.

The above may explain why the reading of Mr. Aldis's addresses in printed reports means far more to those who have heard and seen him, than to those who merely read them, and never heard his voice ; such might find his messages undistinguished.

Yet the gift of Mr. Aldis lay rather in presiding at great gatherings than in being a frequent speaker, and with the years that gift began to unfold as first he was made leader of the series of morning missionary prayer meetings, and then became chairman of the deeply impressive Missionary meeting. From these, for a man clearly endowed with genius for presiding, it became but a step to Chairmanship.

The essential quality in him was a wonderful combination of alertness and awe. To confront so attentive and so responsive an audience as gathers in the great Tent, and, confronting it, to witness the power of the Word of God as it proceeds on its mighty way, searching, breaking, burning—this is an experience for which none but honest and humble men of God are prepared. Mr. Aldis once said, " I confess I stand here this evening with the awe of God upon my soul, and I would not dare to stand here as His messenger had I not, first of all, stood before Him and humbly received from Him again that which I would urge upon everyone this evening—that we shall be ' filled with the Spirit.' "

His own keen sense of the danger of artificiality at such a place, added to his consciousness of the transcendent majesty of God, brought very frequently to his lips the words—" a message which has searched my own soul first of all, or I would not dare to bring it to you."

Over a period of twenty-three years he was a familiar figure on the platform, but he never slipped into familiarity with it. He had seen great audiences swayed and moved as a field of corn is bowed before the wind, but what impressed beholders was the fear and trembling with which he ever walked before God. The way he sat down on the platform, and his every approach to it, seemed a commentary on the Divine claim : " I am God Almighty ; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." This it was which preserved his voice

from any cadence of insincerity. It kept him free of any artifice. He stood and faced that vast concourse of people as one who was standing in the presence of God.

Keswick is a place on which the fire of God descends. Folk with deep and hungry yearnings after God are there in such large numbers that almost anything is possible. Young hot-heads are therefore critical when a Chairman seems nervous of mass emotion. But in Mr. Aldis a vision of the Lord had produced such a recoil from any tampering with the mighty flame of the Holy Spirit, that no merely psychic elation or flaring emotion would be admitted. He was too wise a soul-surgeon to encourage mere excitement. When deep impressions were made, he would fain have each soul aware only of God, so that vows might be made in His presence, and made in such quietness as allowed the soul's vigour to be retained in order to be used in paying the vows. It was never on the momentary glow of a spiritual crisis that he concentrated attention except in so far as to guarantee what God was to get out of it afterwards. The vision which had come in the exaltation of a great assembly required, in his view, to become the momentum behind a life which was henceforth geared for action.

There was nothing doctrinaire about this swiftly-moving man. He sponsored or advocated no rigid doctrine of sanctification such as made necessary a life on strained or unnatural lines. After the stress on the holiness of God and God's claim that we shall become like Him, the second strand of Keswick teaching as Mr. Aldis exemplified it was "faith which *worketh* by love." The practical outworking was what filled his mind, so he summoned Convention-attenders away from introspection or mere contemplation, and enlisted them for *service*.

Nothing seemed so natural to him (except the wonderful Communion Service with which the Convention concludes) than that the teaching of the week of meetings should find its outlet and practical application in the Missionary Meeting. This great assembly, held formerly on the Saturday morning, nowadays marks the Friday morning. As the missionaries representing all the world fields gathered nervously at the Convention Lodge before the meeting at which each was to try to pack a significant message into five or seven minutes of speaking before that immense audience of five thousand people, how refreshed and braced they were by the calm and courteous understanding and assurance of their Chairman, as they went to prayer ! And how glad they were to trust the momentous

appeal at the close of the long, tense meeting into such skilled hands ! From the closing moments of that meeting, numberless servants of Christ date their call from God to foreign fields of service, and, in the holiest place of all, the memories of many are entwined with the voice and the demeanour of Mr. Aldis as he pleaded for His Master and called for volunteers.

Nevertheless Keswick is not entirely a platform ministry, and a Chairman's life behind the scenes gives tone both to speakers and hearers. Many have remarked on the seeming freedom from strain which marked Mr. Aldis, though the responsibility he carried must have made the week a peculiarly heavy one. Coming out of the tent one day, a young C.I.M. missionary was greatly surprised and pleased to have Mr. Aldis put his hand on his shoulder and call him by his Christian name. When the Chairman of the Convention found time to address a very junior worker thus, it cheered him greatly.

But that was essentially the Chairman. Several times in talks which the writer will gratefully remember, Mr. Aldis would refer to occasions of high tension and abounding possibilities at Keswick, or would recall some less happy experiments, and his comments were most illuminating. Very shrewdly, and ever generously, he would say all that needed to be said about a certain personality or message or method in the words, " Well ! That's not Keswick ! " Perhaps the schoolboy phrase echoed in the background of one's mind, deprecating an action or procedure as " not cricket," but somehow it was a very comprehensive test of demeanour and bearing and attitude of soul, this " *not Keswick* " as our Chairman employed it. The meekness and gentleness of Christ, the self-effacing adoration of the seraphim, or the Apostolic readiness to be accursed so long as God's purposes march forward—all that and more seemed to be involved by contrast in the words. The entire doctrine of the fullness of the Holy Spirit was somehow brought to focus by this phrase. Here was a touchstone of the total impression which a personality or an address leaves upon us. It was by this acid test that all connected with the Convention must be judged. It was according to God's pattern (revealed and expounded at Keswick) that W. H. Aldis daily lived.

11

"That Distinctive Blend"

WHAT makes human beings so interesting is their diversity. The ingredients are mixed in such varied proportions in different people. In W. H. Aldis some qualities of an apparently contrary character meet and coalesce in one personality.

He was both a man of prayer and a man of action.

Asked about her husband's habits of prayer, Mrs. Aldis at once explained that he was not one who shut himself in a room and prayed for hours at a time. "He prayed," she remarked, "as he walked." After his private time of prayer, which he observed regularly first thing in the morning, he invariably joined his wife before breakfast for a season of united prayer. Together they prayed for their family and grandchildren, and for the work of God that was dear to both.

Yet it would be utterly wrong to conclude that work or activity came first, while prayer was relegated to the fringe. Emphatically he was not the kind of chairman who loves a short prayer "and then to the Agenda, to tackle the real business." In November, 1940, he was planning to gather for a time of prayer and conference a number of men who were intimately concerned about the Keswick Convention and its future. The details of the meeting, time and place and lunch arrangements, having been thoroughly worked out with the Rev. J. Milton Thompson, Mr. Aldis writes : "I shall also send out something in the nature of an agenda, so that we may know what we have to deal with and save any waste of time. I hope we shall spend a large share of the time in definite waiting upon God with expectation that out of this gathering there may come some new thing from the Lord Himself."

He was concerned to "save any waste of time" in order that there might be an unhurried sense of waiting upon God. Individually he did not spend protracted periods in prayer, but continued seasons of corporate prayer were the breath and life of the activities he sponsored. What unnumbered hours he spent in this way, leading the prayer meetings for revival in Paoning, conducting the weekly and daily prayer meetings at Newington Green as well as the season observed by the C.I.M. for fasting and prayer on the last day of each year, and again in those dynamic missionary prayer meetings at

Keswick every morning for a week! As he presided over any Council meeting, he set apart the first and freshest time of all for unhurried prayer. For all the activities in which he so zestfully engaged, it was this which supplied the energy.

When we turn therefore to say that Mr. Aldis was a man of action, we mean that he did not dream of things to be done. In Bournemouth, before a gathering of Christian workers he pleaded that none of us should consent to become a mere looker-on. We must be " in the fight." Praying habits cleared his mind for action. Yet his was never that aimless expenditure of energy parodied by the humorist in skilful words : " Sir Ronald leapt on his steed and rode madly off in all directions." His was not feverish or frantic activity, but the suiting of means to ends, action with purpose and plan, and, most of all, it was activity controlled and directed from on high.

From early morning till late at night he was on the move. He seemed satisfied with far less sleep than others need. " Quality," he quaintly remarked, " and not quantity, is what counts."

He was no mystic, loving to plunge into the depths of his own being in prolonged meditation, or loving the expression of his inward musings in literary form. Streams with little volume may circuitously wind their way to the sea, but this man was a river full of water, and travelled fast. Action was the breath of his life. As a young man at the Language School at Anking (so a missionary colleague of his early days informs us), the young recruit chose as a basis for a Bible-reading to his companions a verse in Psalm 18: " He maketh my feet like hind's feet," and this text his friend has associated with Mr. Aldis ever since, saying, " Vigour and drive were at all times his characteristics, with a deep spirituality. He was practical, and had no fads : and a sense of humour contributed to his sanity of outlook."

Of the drive and the desire to get things moving, the two following extracts from letters furnish illustrations. They were written in November and December, 1940, when Mr. Aldis was exploring the possibility of making the Keswick Convention operate even in war-time. To those invited he wrote : " I hope sincerely that even if it should be somewhat inconvenient you will make the endeavour to be present. I feel that there is a danger in these days of war that we may too readily assume that many of these spiritual agencies must for the time being cease to function. Whilst we certainly do not want to act hastily or in any way which might embarrass those in authority, yet we surely must not give the impression that these God-honoured

movements are less needed in days of war than in days of peace. We need to be quite sure that we are not acquiescing in what would be really a victory for the adversary."

There is an illuminating paragraph to a friend, written after the above meeting had taken place, which may be quoted too : " I have sent out a full report of the gathering to all the Trustees, but so far as I can gather from the responses received, most of them seem to feel that the difficulties are so overwhelming that I am not hopeful of anything of a satisfactory character resulting from our conference. However, I shall not give up hope, but continue to do my utmost to get something moving, although one has to be very careful even in matters like this that it is not the energy of the flesh but the urge of the Spirit behind it all. As a matter of fact we very badly need some new trustees, and I hope one result of the present emergency will be that we shall see clearly whom the Lord would have us add to our number."

From a man within a month of his seventieth birthday, the hint of impatience which that letter reveals is most striking. War or no war, he desired for the honour of God's name to " get something moving." Mr. Montague Goodman, at the Memorial Service, narrated how it was due to Mr. Aldis's indomitable faith and unwearied persistence that the London Bible College came into being. The war had seemed to leave so many plans in ruins that some who before 1939 had prayed and designed for a Bible College in London were somewhat daunted at the poor prospects of launching such a new venture amid the confusion of the post-war scene. They were inclined to postpone any planning until they should see what the world after the convulsion looked like. It seemed likely that the nation's resources would be strained to the uttermost ; so many churches would need to be rebuilt, such colossal damage made good, could they foresee the shape of things to come ? But with Mr. Aldis in their midst, confident, youthful, dynamic, the group of Directors summoned by him to a conference found themselves invited to pray, and then impelled to do something to give effect to their prayers. Thus the enterprise was, not wished for, but willed, and the London Bible College began its great career. It was thus that its first President was always wont to bring the best out of the men who were around him. He heightened their quality and drive. No question to him would seem so natural on the lips of an awakened soul addressing its Redeemer as the enquiry, " What wilt Thou have me *to do* ? "

A colleague and friend who knew him for thirty years singles out for mention W.H.A.'s " genius for punctuality," and of course no day-dreaming, no sluggishness of mind, could reach the goal he had set before himself. One could hardly imagine him writing poetry ; any long brooding or attention to form was alien to his nature, but he did as a young man learn shorthand. How typical of the man was that !

Once when asked for help on the vexed question of guidance, he said, that while still eager to " get the hang " of his work in China, he was asked by Bishop Cassels to render him assistance in secretarial work. The young man's first reaction was to dislike, and even resent, any interference with his liberty to be a full and effective missionary to the Chinese, but later in life he said he had learned that often we are guided by God through the need which others have of the gifts with which He has entrusted us. It is a helpful answer, and at the same time leaves us aware that the Bishop had picked on the young man not merely for his immediate value as a secretary, but because of his executive ability and drive. At an astonishingly early age for a man not ordained when he went to the field, W. H. Aldis was accepted as the Bishop's understudy. If he had felt free to become the successor to Bishop Cassels, as very many desired, he would have been a wise administrator, but even more important would have been his gift for initiating enterprises, inspiring men and getting things done.

The sustained strenuousness of this man of prayer, the unceasing activity of a prominent sponsor of sanctification (since so many people imagine sanctification to mean the passiveness of driftwood that waits for the tide to bear it along), it was this combination of qualities that made the man to be more than any message he ever gave : or rather, the man as a product of God's working was and is God's message to our generation.

Dr. Arnold S. Aldis, the second son, writes : " My outstanding recollections of my father are of his tireless energy which never ceased to amaze me, and also the discipline of his life, which was a constant example to us all. He was always up in the morning at about 5.30 for his time of prayer and Bible study, and there was seldom a wasted minute through the whole day until he retired, usually late, to rest. Even the time spent in trams and buses was not wasted, but out came his ever-present attaché case, and letters were written and addresses prepared. His letters to us were often written in trains or on buses."

Another pair of qualities which are usually contrasted, and seldom seen together in equilibrium, were geniality and loyalty to principle. In W. H. Aldis these were wedded, so that the twain became one.

In spite of the strain of shyness that was in him—indeed, as his tribute and offering to that shy element which resides in many people—Mr. Aldis is remembered for his unaffected friendliness. Obscure and ungifted people—the "nobodies," as they termed themselves—have noted what they call his "graciousness" as an unfailing source of gratification to them. Possibly they had supposed that the Chairman of the Keswick Convention would be a dignitary, aloof and olympian. With a little gasp of delight many of them found Mr. Aldis by their side and one of them. Was it a function where tea had been served? Then you would be sure to find him on his feet clearing away the things, taking down the tables, and setting the forms or chairs in readiness for the address that was to follow. Like his Master, he quickly saw what had been left undone, and went and did it. No thought of "dignity" deterred him. At Swanwick or Keswick, visitors would have as readily expected that the "Hayes" or the Tent would one morning be covered with blue snow as that Mr. Aldis should, so to say, "give himself airs." Active as he was, he had time for every courtesy.

Thus it was his nearness to human beings, and the sensitive consideration for others which lay behind that, which were a great element in his charm. He seemed to gravitate towards the lowly and the needy.

The Misses Wilson and Mr. King, representing the Homes of the C.I.M. in Tunbridge Wells, supply us with a glimpse of his many-sided activities for retired missionaries. Their wish was "to put on record something of what these Homes owe to Mr. Aldis. From the very beginning of the work, when he agreed to the Châlet at Bidborough being used as a home for three or four elderly 'retireds,' till the day of his death, when No. 4 and No. 17 Boyne Park had been acquired for the purpose of accommodating between them over twenty missionaries, Mr. Aldis was tireless in his energies on their behalf. He and his car were constantly arriving just when there was some urgent need which he could, and did, so gladly meet. And this quite apart from the regular transport to and from church on Sundays. But his 'chauffeur's duties,' as he laughingly termed them, were only a fraction of the help he gave so unstintingly in his ministering to the saints. His self-imposed duty as gardener took a great deal of his time and strength, especially at No. 17, where the

big garden would have been a very serious burden financially and otherwise had he not taken it from the Lord as his share in the work. It was not unfitting that at the funeral, amidst the more than fifty beautiful wreaths, there should be one composed entirely of the flowers he had planted and tended with his own hands. His many other services in connection with the Homes which might be classified under the heading of ' secular ' are almost too numerous to mention, but include accounts, buying furniture, laying carpets and linoleums, letter-writing and giving advice on all manner of subjects, making of wills, and carpentering.

" Our last reference must be to the more definitely spiritual ministry in which he engaged in the Homes, though all the above service was truly done ' in the Spirit ' and ' of the ability which God ' gave him. These last, so deeply appreciated by us all were : visiting, and praying with, the sick ; taking funerals (and in this the note of triumph was always dominant) ; and the prayer meeting and Holy Communion services, when he and we ' drew near and tasted things unseen ' and were strengthened by God's Spirit in the inner man. Mrs. Aldis, when able, joined us in these services, and no appreciation of Mr. Aldis would be complete without including Mrs. Aldis, who from the very inception of the work daily shared with her husband the burden of prayer for these Homes, and who never withheld him from this or any other activity to which the Lord called His servant, but rejoiced that God enabled him to be ' a succourer of many, and of ourselves also.' "

Kindly consideration for human beings ran all through his nature. Yet it would be equally true to insist that deep and holy concern for God's glory made him independent of men and movements that were " popular." In a revealing letter to his clergyman son, he wrote :

" I think if I had a Church in these days I should decline to go in for constant ' stunts.' I believe if the Gospel and the whole Word of God is regularly preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, things will happen. That does not mean I wouldn't put in hard work, visiting, and in other ways.

" Then I should refuse to allow Young People's work to loom so large that they begin to imagine they are the only people that matter. I would try to run a Bible Study class, with plenty of opportunities to ask questions. The fact is, in our Churches the great majority of the people don't know what the Gospel is, and I would constantly try to make clear God's way of salvation. Then there is an appalling ignorance of the Bible, which simply must be remedied."

Of the keen and independent mind which James Stark, C.I.M. Secretary in Shanghai, had long before discerned in him, such a letter is evidence. Lover of youth as he was, Mr. Aldis would preserve them from illusions !

A quality of fearless outspokenness was in his utterances, because he seemed aware that there is no humbug so pernicious as religious humbug. Perceptive as he was of the subtle and intricate workings of the mind, he saw what was meant when Dr. Douglas Adam wrote once in *China's Millions*, that " No amount of devotional life can make up for a retreat from practical, actual, difficult tasks in life."

Rigorous as he was with himself, he had on several occasions to depart from an attitude of neutrality, fearing that this would be nothing else than the ignoble art of evasion. Taking action where it would have been pleasanter to do nothing, he sacrificed for principle friendships which were not only precious in themselves but which had through the generosity of others eased the circumstances of his daily life. It is only a very humble and honest man of God who dares to do that, or can do it in a spirit of meekness, mindful of his own infirmity.

All the more remarkable was this Elijah-like quality in a man so comradely that Robert Gillies declares, " The outstanding feature of our friendship was that he never seemed to change. He was just the same in 1946 as he was in 1897, and we seemed to resume a conversation after a lapse of several years as if we were in the habit of constantly meeting, and the passing of the years made no difference." Genial yet unyielding, it is small wonder that this Valiant-for-Truth was a favourite speaker to classes connected with the Crusaders' Union.

There was a third combination of qualities in Mr. Aldis that generally form an antithesis—these were drive and diffidence.

William Aldis had a quick and alert mind. Swiftly he took in the bearings of any question. His prayer at the commencement of a C.I.M. Council Meeting often contained the petition that God would help the Council to come to quick decisions. Unrelenting concern for the concluding of the business in hand made him steer skilfully past irrelevancies or digressions or particular instances. The group he presided over kept moving forward, always with a sense of destination.

At a recent Remembrance Service, where his three-year-old grandson was present, there came the two-minute pause for silence.

As the hush of stillness continued, in a very audible voice the child was heard to ask, " What are we waiting for ? " In that sense of the flight of time and the desire to see something accomplished, which the boy so artlessly expressed, smiling friends saw reproduced a characteristic of his grandfather !

In a notable tribute, paid at the funeral service by the Rev. J. Russell Howden, who had known him for many years in close association both at the C.I.M. Headquarters and in the Keswick Movement, the speaker remarked that when Mr. Aldis was summoned to undertake the office of Home Director be began to reveal a hitherto unsuspected stature. He suddenly blossomed out, and from that time forward, when he became the Chairman of the great gatherings at Keswick, those awesome evening gatherings or the tremendous Missionary meeting, he rose to the occasion in an impressive way. He was well into his fifties before the full stature showed, but then for a score of years his hands were steady till the going down of the sun.

That slight element of surprise which Mr. Howden expressed or hinted at concerning " unsuspected stature " in Mr. Aldis, was due to the speaker's awareness of that other side of his friend's nature—his diffidence. This man who could spur others to action, who could launch an enterprise by carrying waverers along with him, who was an acknowledged master of assemblies, was true to type as a man whose soul was nurtured on Scripture, for he belonged to the noble company of Moses and Gideon and David and the prophets. In his own soul their occurred a moment of hesitation. For the majestic tasks of God, who was he and what was his father's house ? Yet when God had reaffirmed His commission and His command, the once-diffident servant assumed the reins of office and steered with a steady and unfaltering hand, till those who watched him admired and marvelled. Why should he be so unhesitating when some strong men gathered around him were not sure of themselves ? On what tidal wave of power was he carried when others seemed still caught amidst cross-currents ?

Looking back, we recognize that God was fulfilling in His servant's life a Biblical pattern once again. The diffidence of holy men comes of the fact that they live in " a land of far distances." Their eyes are wide open to reality, for they stand in the searching light of God. Yet their diffidence makes way for decisiveness and drive when there sounds through their soul the voice of God, saying, " Have not I commanded thee ? Be strong and of a good courage."

It is the above quality of being so true to Biblical type that has made this character seem worth portraying and this life-story seem worth telling. Few prominent lives today seem so impregnated with Scripture. All too few people seem to have "made everything according to the pattern shown them in the mount."

Where we find a peculiar blend of qualities, or something in the flavour of a personality, which glorifies God and draws many hearts out in hunger and thirst after righteousness, we are watching the Master Workman shaping someone after the image of His Son. And it may have been that tension as between opposite qualities and characteristics in Mr. Aldis of which evidence has been given, which in the hands of God brought forth a character of such unusual balance. It was the sanity of saintliness in him that became the pervasive thing. Always nervous of extravagance, he was no eccentric, no victim of weird impulses, no absent-minded dreamer, remote from the everyday world. Never was there a more practical and realistic saint. Prayer and action, rigour and geniality, drive and diffidence—the qualities were held in equipoise. From diverse notes God produced a harmony of peculiar sweetness and strength. The face we saw was a human face— the face of one who accepted with quite extraordinary heartiness the full tale of hum-drum tasks, yes, shopping too, which life in modern England has imposed on all, yet on those features there shone a serenity and a gladsome assurance of faith which were the product of a life that was "hid with Christ in God."

12

More Intimate Glimpses

THE outward events of a life may be chronicled and yet the quality of the character involved may elude the reader. The correct standpoint will be reached if we ask ourselves, " What is the significance for us of William Henry Aldis ? " The message of his life to us may be something more than he ever put into words. Here, then, we must seek to gather together some impressions in order to convey the essential spirit of the man.

In the hearts of thousands of people, Mr. Aldis is remembered as a man greatly beloved, yet it would never have entered his mind that he should become the subject of interest. He would never have dreamed that any record of his life could be desired. He kept no diaries. In his truly nomadic life, frequent removals seemed to demand that accumulated correspondence should be ruthlessly reduced. Moreover, his was such a genuinely youthful outlook that he did not live in the past. Ageing people often tend to become self-absorbed, but to the end he was gloriously free from pre-occupation with himself. His aim was always to direct attention to his Saviour.

Such unfeigned selflessness is rare. The world's bookshelves are laden with the story of its successful men and women, who loved to talk about themselves, and the reader is made to feel the tension or suspense which grew acute at the crowning hours of the career. When day-dreams are realized, the fret and the fever of self-esteem is not perhaps fully brought out. Success has largely obliterated the sense of anxiety or the acute mortification which proved at some stages an oppressive burden to those whose absorbing thought was their own career. But here was a man who seemed quite free from the thought that he even had a career. True, when he was best known, he had already passed the " allotted span " of years, and it may be supposed that at such an age any man is able to relax, and become a picture of serenity and healthfulness of soul. But no ; it was no merely negative repose of which we were aware. The self-effacement we speak of was not blank, but winsome.

Nothing gave him greater delight than to serve the infirm, or to busy himself for lonely and neglected people. On the day before he died, he conveyed some aged missionaries in his car to the place

to which they desired to go, for he was their self-constituted chauffeur. " The car," as his wife once remarked, " was dedicated to the Lord in the same way as he was himself, and was used absolutely and only for the Lord's work."

The infectious smile and merry quip which heralded his entrance into either of the houses for ex-China missionaries at Boyne Park, Tunbridge Wells, became something to which the residents looked forward as the indispensable sunshine of their day. It was in 1947 that the second of these houses was secured and furnished, during the new Home Director's absence in China, but Mr. Aldis busied himself in the task of acquiring the property with unflagging zest, and sometimes spent a whole day at auction sales (on occasions, fruitlessly) in order to guarantee that the minimum at least of furniture should not be lacking to the Lord's loved and superannuated servants. That was characteristic of the man. Likewise, when air-raids were expected or had happened, his readiness to help disabled or frightened people came uppermost. He would go out in the middle of the night, with the remark to his wife, " Oh, I think I'll go around and see . . . Perhaps I can do something." As his admiring life's partner exclaimed, " He was always so strong. He never seemed to tire, somehow. Not many have that resilience and strength."

" His persistent activity "—that was the quality which a colleague of his early days in China noted as the outstanding feature of his nature, and it was undiminished, nay, it was more remarkably apparent, in his closing years. God had made his feet like hind's feet, and had set him upon his high places—those high places where the soul breathes invigorating air.

Selflessness was a positive thing in him : it was his preoccupation with others and his love of action that made him prodigal of his magnificent vitality. But his absorbed faith in God also shows in a quite different department of life. It became the secret of Mr. Aldis's detachment from the lure of money. A man who had three sons to educate and launch on their life's work, he might have been excused if he had given a great deal of thought to the problem of augmenting the income which was his as a member of a " Faith Mission " ; and part of the reason which induced him to accept a curacy at St. Paul's Church, Portman Square, under Dr. J. Stuart Holden, was his desire to provide a satisfactory education for his sons. This addition to the duties which were already his as Secretary for the Youth Department at Headquarters of the C.I.M. meant that he had

to fill in the interstices of time, and live a very full life. One of his sons remembers that as they travelled home by bus on a Sunday night after his father's busy day, he would already begin " roughing out " a sermon for the following Sunday, or for a meeting during the week.

What any true father with forethought would do, Mr. Aldis was prepared to do, and more. But he was not prepared to give his soul to money, or to allow it to become an end in itself. That heavy care which oppresses parents, that corrosive anxiety which wonders whether the margin of security is large enough which seeps into the soul of the middle-aged, were quite literally cast (as a fisherman's line is cast) away from him, and not drawn in again. His committal of himself and his family to God's loving care was complete and serene.

One Friday at the close of the Bible Class which he conducted at Portman Square, an elderly lady waited behind and put into his hands an envelope, explaining that she had been instructed to give it to him. He placed the rather bulky package among his papers, and travelled home. At lunch he undid the wrappings, and discovered, to his dismay, that the envelope contained no less than £100 in notes. There was no clue as to where the lady might be found, so action had to be deferred until the following Friday. Once again the lady was present, and at the close of the Bible Class, Mr. Aldis went to her and expressed his surprise at finding the contents of her package to be what they were, and requested her to receive them back from him, explaining that it was not his custom as a clergyman to accept money in such circumstances, especially from a lady unknown. The visitor described herself as a lady's maid in a family which made a periodical visit to town, and indicated that when in London she made a habit of attending his Bible Class in Portman Square. Her explanation was, " The Lord said to me that I was to take from my savings and give this money to you, and all I thought about it was that there must be some particular need. It hardly seems right to me that you should return it. You feel now that you cannot accept it. Should you not rather wait for a week, and then see ? All I know is that I was led to give it to you."

He returned home and recounting the interview to his wife, Mr. Aldis suddenly thought of something that was causing him considerable inconvenience, namely, goitre. He expressed the thought that perhaps God was indicating to him the desirability of having an operation performed, for its removal. His wife at once concurred. " Why, yes ! " she exclaimed, but she never seems to have marvelled that her husband, generally so quick, should have

been so slow to think of this ! That was because it was his nature to be scrupulously careful about money gifts. Not expecting them, he was rendered uneasy by them. It was only from a friend who had a personal understanding of his family's needs that he would accept a gift. As for the lady who brought the wad of notes, he never saw her or heard from her again. She had been a messenger from God, charged with a particular errand to a servant of His who seemed not to be taking any steps for his own relief.

" How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend . . ."

That was a favourite strain of praise on Mr. Aldis's lips. Earlier, in their missionary career, there had come a time when husband and wife discovered with uneasiness that their personal account with the Mission had been overspent to the amount of £10. Inland China, far from headquarters, with the hazards of illness and similar emergencies, makes the experience all but inevitable, and there it was. But the unhappiness about the deficit was quickly dispersed, and in a remarkable way. There arrived from England a Money Order for £10, and a covering letter which was gladdening for an added reason. It was written by a father from a heart filled with thanksgiving to say that his boy had been converted to God at the open-air meeting which Mr. Aldis conducted on the evening before he left England to sail for China. What was noteworthy about this father's letter and thankoffering was that they were despatched on the day on which the illness had begun, the illness which had caused the overdraft. Along with the trial God had provided beforehand a way of escape from an indebtedness which the emergency involved.

Hudson Taylor had set a high standard of unanxious faith in God for the missionaries of the China Inland Mission. At the annual meeting in 1897, four months before W.H.A.'s sailing for China, Hudson Taylor said : " I like to think of Him Who sent three millions of Israelites to bed without a crumb in the cupboard for breakfast the next morning, and to remember that they never got up in the morning and found no breakfast ready to be gathered . . . It is a great delight to feel that we have a great and glorious God to deal with, and One who loves to supply His people's need, and to show Himself strong on behalf of those who put their trust in Him before the sons of men." It was into such an attitude of quiet, adoring trust that Mr. and Mrs. Aldis both moved, taught by the Holy Spirit.

At this point a tribute seems necessary to the woman whose brave comradeship and quiet faith have been the unbroken accompaniment to her husband's high-souled devotion.

It was to their home in Paoning that young missionaries were sent. Here they were initiated into their task. The happy love of this home was the atmosphere which softened for many the transition from abounding Christian fellowship in the homeland to the arid wastes of a missionary's chosen sphere. Being at the disposal of others, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Aldis was not quite their own, just as *they* were not their own ; and such their existence continued to be until very late in life. It was only in very recent years that a house (really their own) in Southborough was donated by an anonymous friend and specially earmarked for the use of Mr. and Mrs. Aldis as long as they should need it, and thereafter to revert to the Mission.

A woman is a home-maker and loves a home of her own. All honour to the lady who so utterly entered into the life of her husband, and who gave herself so unweariedly to God's work, to her husband, and to her boys ! Unavoidably her husband was often away from home on the deputation journeys which as Home Director he had to accomplish (three out of four Sundays a month were given to this after 1929—and often four), so there is manifestly much of quiet heroism in Mrs. Aldis which made her a most fitting companion to her husband. More obscure her part has inevitably been, especially through arthritis and the deafness which was left as an aftermath of typhoid in 1912, but her unadorned narrative of some of the straits and necessities they sometimes came through would make a moving story, if it were permitted. One of the boys suffered acutely from asthma in early childhood, and was for the most part educated at home (and incidentally, he brings considerable glory to that institution !), and Mrs. Aldis can remember one whole week when she got no sleep. Their household budget, now that they were back in England, did not allow of their having a maid, and life was hard. Yet this great-hearted woman realized that for the children's sake she must keep cheerful. There came home to her once as a message from God for the strengthening of her own soul, two verses from the hymn entitled, " Go, bury thy sorrow." The message to her was :

" Go, tell it to Jesus, He knoweth thy grief ;
Go, tell it to Jesus, He'll send thee relief ;
Go, gather the sunshine He sheds on the way ;
He'll lighten thy burden—go, weary one pray."

" Hearts growing a-weary with heavier woe
Now droop 'mid the darkness—go, comfort them, go !
Go, bury thy sorrow, let others be blest ;
Go, give them the sunshine, tell Jesus the rest."

Many a time when the day proved tiring, Mrs. Aldis steeled herself to " give others the sunshine " and she would postpone till the evening her desire to " tell Jesus the rest "—" For there is a ' rest,' you know ! " she added, in her sensible and yet whimsical way. " Others " must get the " sunshine " while the day lasted : so she reckoned, but she looked forward to the chance of unloading her heart to Jesus, once the long day was over, and fortified her heart by saying to herself : " You wait till tonight, and then you can have your little ' grouse ' ! "

Such was the quality of the woman whom God gave W. H. Aldis as a helpmeet, and the glimpses of the intimate and everyday life of these servants of God as they reared a family for His glory have their own enriching value. Together husband and wife had come through upheavals and alarms. Once in China the Reds fired into their courtyard when Mr. Aldis and a friend were standing there, and a bullet passed between their two heads. At another time a cartridge was shot through the glass in the door of their house, travelled along the passage, and into the kitchen. Thanks to the fact that the kitchen floor was two steps down from the roadway, the cartridge passed over the head of the Chinese cook who was preparing the meal. There were, besides, often anxious times at the season of the rice planting. Moreover the years of Boxer fury must have been a fierce ordeal for any woman. Serene and steadfast she remains. The great secret of her strength lay in that access to God which she and her husband enjoyed in their united time of morning prayer. That time of united prayer began when their first baby boy was expected, and offered them, in a home which was shared by their junior missionary colleagues, almost their sole opportunity of united communion with God. At this season of the day she and her husband together, sought God's face for their boys, their work, their friends. "And it is that that I am missing now," she says. But soon afterwards she added this remark : " The Lord has had my husband all his life, and if there is anything more now that He asks, then I do not want to hold it back." Most aptly, therefore, did a lady who knew Mrs. Aldis well write to her saying, " The Lord *loveth* a cheerful giver."

Asked by someone what inscription she would like on her husband's gravestone, she expressed a liking for the phrase : " His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." The verdict had been expressed at his Memorial Service that Mr. Aldis was " a Prince in Israel," and it was suggested to Mrs. Aldis that this might appear on the inscription. " Oh ! no," she said. " ' A man greatly beloved '—if you wish, I would agree to that. That was true, and it isn't boasting. But I wouldn't have ' a Prince in Israel.' I'm sure he wouldn't like that ! "

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The Terror by Night

THE years between the two world-shaking wars were a strange mixture of apprehension and calm. Hope contended for its very life with fear. As the years passed a haunting sense of unsettlement seized the public mind. An apparently defeated nation was preparing to strike again, to recapture lost power. The first developments were disregarded as of little importance, but armaments multiplied and slowly apprehension became alarm.

Late in this intervening period W. H. Aldis, as Home Director of the C.I.M., visited Germany. He sensed the critical temper of the time. The impressions received found expression in prayer at the Keswick Convention of 1938. A German pastor who was present has described the profound effect of that prayer as he heard it uttered in the Tent amid the quiet Lakeland hills. Instantly he recognized that the Chairman was, for an Englishman, unusually aware of impending events. He discerned with relief that the Christians gathered at Keswick were not deceived by the Satanic forces which were benumbing the minds of statesmen.

In addition to his contacts with Germany and Switzerland, the Home Director visited war-torn China during the winter of 1938–9 for the purpose of being present at the meeting of the China Council along with Home Directors of other countries. The invasion of China by the Japanese restricted travel and made impossible a trip into the far western interior which would have been so dear to him. But what he saw of devastation, dislocation and hunger made him feel anew the stark horror of war. He loathed it with all his soul. And yet he felt that even *that* was to be preferred to moral enslavement to some monstrous tyranny. For him, moral issues were never to be weighed against our own comfort or safety. He was aware that very dark days were ahead, but his faith in God placed him unflinchingly and early among those who said, as he did in a letter to his youngest son, " Better die than be under Nazi rule."

But the German pastor, Bruno Offermann, ought to be heard in his own words for the impression of this man of God to whom his soul was knit. " I had got to know Mr. Aldis at Newington Green in 1931, and I was struck by his kindness and love towards me, whom he only knew by what Mr. Walter B. Sloan might have told him.

I once passed his office on my way to the Wednesday afternoon prayer meeting. The door of his office was open, and I felt bound to take just a glance into the room. I saw him kneeling there at the side, his Bible in one hand and with the other hand covering his face before Almighty God in stillness and reverence. Since that glimpse I recognize the kindness of our God and Saviour and His love toward men embodied again in His servant.

" And then in 1936 I had the privilege to interpret for Mr. Gibb of Shanghai and the Rev. Aldis in a divine service in our mother house of the deaconesses at Hebron, Marburg Lahn. He spoke in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit on 2 Cor. 5, verses 10, 14–17 and 21—a message from God Himself. I ventured to ask him after the meeting, ' Please do tell me how you attained this real, true and spiritual message, and this real, true and spiritual power ! ' Mr. Aldis kindly answered : ' Of course I really read my Bible. Next most helpful to me has been Dr. Alexander Maclaren, and other saints. But above all it is the Lord who does it all, and I plead with Him by agony of prayer. Mr. Offermann, *I* can only hinder Him. It is not at all *me*, but Christ Himself.' "

When war became at length inevitable, it was instinctively felt that the bonds of Christian faith would remain unbroken and would ultimately outlive the shattering convulsions of battling nations. The bonds that are in Christ are for ever. Yet agonizing years of war held unseen developments in China and unguessed changes in the lands of Europe from which the missionaries came. To bridge that gap of silence, the Home Director wrote a few days after war began a letter which was felt by the Mission Directorate in Germany to have transcendent worth. It found its way to its destination through Switzerland, and the extract below is printed at the request of the grateful recipients.

" In this sad hour of war between our countries I feel constrained to write to you as our fellow-workers for the Kingdom of God in China, to express the confident hope that our fellowship in Christ will be maintained to the full through all the coming days, however long and dark they may be.

" We thank God for our oneness in Christ Jesus, and we shall all of us recognize that we belong to the family of God, and as His children we shall ever endeavour to love one another with a pure heart fervently. We shall seek to remember that we must obey our Lord's command to seek first the Kingdom of God, and although we may not be privileged to meet one another, yet at the Throne of

Grace we shall meet in spirit and commend one another to the Lord and to His gracious keeping.

" Your work in China will have a real share in our prayers, and we shall rejoice with you in all the prosperity the Lord may give to your work and witness in that land.

" When these unhappy days of war are over—and God grant it may be soon !—we shall rejoice to meet one another in the flesh, and together praise Him for His faithfulness which endureth for ever."

Mission-director Hering subsequently wrote of this communication: " I am not able to say how deeply this letter, being just what it was, impressed us at the beginning of the war. It was such a visible sign of our union in Christ that we continued to thank God for it over and over again. It meant such an immeasurable lot to us in those days."

War had come again, and if in his early adventurous years it had seemed as if William Aldis was destined to confront contending events, these persisted and only reached their climax in his closing years. More than ever, danger and destruction became like the breath in his nostrils. In a letter to his youngest son, written, characteristically, " in a train," there is a breathless quality, but poise and concern for others always shines through.

" You will possibly have heard that the C.I.M. was bombed on Saturday night—not a direct hit but a heavy bomb on the tennis court, making a huge crater and uprooting trees, etc. Great lumps of concrete were hurled up and dashed through the roof. 143 windows are smashed, but very little structural damage was done. It is really a miracle. No one was injured. The houses in the road backing on the C.I.M. had several bombs, and many are demolished, a number of people being killed.

" Our grounds are just a ghastly mess, and the house is in an appalling state. I slept in my room there last night [Mrs. Aldis had been evacuated from London] but without any windows. Just a bit cold !

" Humanly, I imagine we haven't a chance, for we are out-manoeuvred, out-numbered, and out-generalled, but I believe the Lord will deliver us, and we must hold on in faith.

" I wonder how many of us will survive the next few months. It is a great thing to be ready for death in these days. When the Nazis have settled Greece, I suppose we must expect some devastating and death-dealing air-raids on a large scale. But better die than to be

under Nazi rule. I hope you get some raid-free nights with undisturbed sleep.

" I see the search-lights are just switching on, so I fear an 'alert' must have sounded, and that accounts for the way in which this train is crawling along.

" May the Lord bless and encourage you, and help you to be a cheer to others, like Paul in the shipwreck."

Preaching and deputation visits that were made to other parts of the country were as likely to take the Home Director into an air-raid as to offer quietness. On one visit to Southampton (his host has related) Mr. Aldis was determined to find his way back to Newington Green the same night. As soon as any train went out after the meeting was over, off he would go ! " But," he was asked, " supposing you get into London at midnight, and buses are off ? " The Home Director, however, was not to be dissuaded from getting back to his beloved centre, and answered that he would reach Newington Green on foot. After seeing him to the station, his host drove home. Trains were so irregular that Mr. Aldis insisted on waiting at the station alone. But Southampton was not left undisturbed : the " alert " sounded, and soon the planes were overhead. As the railway station was near the electrical power station, down in a hollow, host and hostess were wondering if their visitor had got away safely, when the telephone rang. " Yes," he was still at the station. Without delay the car was taken out, and their guest was quickly brought back and now consented to stay the night !

The following article, entitled, " Three Amazing Days " appeared from the Home Director's pen in *China's Millions* for November–December, 1940 :

" Never during the 75 years of the Mission's history did a party of recruits sail in such thrilling conditions as the thirteen women accompanied by six returning missionaries and two little children in mid-September.

" For a few days before the sailing, the party had been assembling at our London Headquarters. They came in faith that they were to sail, for only two or three days before information had been received that there would be no ship available. Then, in answer to believing prayer, quite suddenly we were told that accommodation would be provided in a ship sailing in a few days' time. The shipping company officer remarked in passing on the information, ' This is a miracle.' Then followed some hectic hours as the exit permits were secured, and the many necessary formalities in these days of war were carried out.

"The Valedictory Meeting was fixed for six o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, September 10th. A surprisingly large number of people assembled by 5.30, when suddenly the wail of the siren was heard. As the hall is not a 'safe' building, we all had to retire to an official shelter near by. Fifteen minutes later the 'all clear' sounded, and we returned to the hall. We were having prayer before going on the platform when the siren sounded again, so once more we all retired to the shelter, this time for twenty-five minutes. By half-past six we were all back in the hall and had the briefest valedictory meeting on record—just half an hour—but it was packed full of inspiration as nineteen recruits in a minute each told how God had called them. Mr. Fairclough gave a telling sentence on behalf of the returning missionaries: 'We are returning to China in obedience to our Lord's word, "Occupy till I come," or in modern phraseology "Business as usual!"' The Chairman reminded them that the King's business required haste, and, commending them to the Lord and His gracious care, brought the meeting to its close.

"A happy company returned to the Headquarters, and, when just after dark the siren sounded again, all retired either to the basement or to the shelter in the grounds. The night was not exactly restful, but there was peace in our hearts as we sat or lay down, as space permitted, and heard the drone of the bombers, and the crashing of the bombs while they did their deadly work, and the roar of the guns for our defence. Sometimes the bombs seemed very near, but we were kept through the hours of darkness in safety.

"The next day the Farewell Communion Service was to take place, and at four o'clock we gathered in our Prayer Hall as we have done scores of times around the Table of our Lord to remember Him in His dying love 'until He come.' At this service it is our custom to receive the recruits into the fellowship of the Mission.

"Just as the service commenced the noise of approaching planes was heard, and in a moment or two a fierce air battle was raging overhead. The din was almost deafening; bombs, guns, zooming fighters and a crashing plane sounded like hell let loose, and we felt as though the powers of darkness were doing their worst to oppose us. The recruits, who were received one at a time into the fellowship of the Mission with a text for each and a clasp of the hand, must have been reminded that their work was going to be a fight. Then quiet came as the fight ceased, and the last minutes of that remarkable gathering were like calm after a tornado.

"The night was spent just as the previous one, in basement or

shelter. It was a noisy night with bomb and shell all around, but the risen Lord Himself seemed to walk among us and say, 'Peace be with you.' In the very early morning everybody was about making final preparations for the departure. Mercifully we were able to go to the railway terminus without the sound of the siren, and soon the good-byes were said and the train steamed out to the strains of the doxology, sung by some of the recruits.

'How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend ;
His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home ;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
We'll trust Him for all that's to come.'

"Later in the day the ship put out to sea to face the perils of the deep in these war days. Prayer surrounded the party every hour of the voyage, and some days later a cablegram from Canada announcing the safe arrival of the party awoke a song of praise in our hearts to Him Whose tender mercy is over all His works."

Accompanying the outward strain of war, there were inward stresses equally anxious but faced with equal courage and patience as the following letter to his son Brian shows :

"I hope that your Mission is still going well and that as the days go by you have increasing signs of blessing. This is just to let you know that I shall not be here on Saturday when you come across as I have to go to Weymouth, and it takes a long time to get there.

"Then I saw Rendle Short yesterday, and I find that an operation on my eye is necessary. I am sorry about this, as I didn't want any more ops., but the Lord has permitted it, so all must be well. There is a growth under the orbit of the eye, and if this proves to be innocent then it will be a comparatively simple thing, but if it is otherwise then of course it might be a different proposition. However, this is in the Lord's hands, and there I can rest.

"I do not know just when he will do the operation, but I hope by the middle of next week. This might give me a chance to see you before I go down.

"When do you actually finish off the Mission ?"

That the writer might be satisfied with the surgical operations he had already undergone, was amply justified. There had previously been an operation for goitre, and after that the appendix had been removed, but most serious of all had been the third one, " when still at the flat " in Newington Green, for gall stones. It had been " touch and go," and had proved an ordeal for his son Arnold, in his privileged position as a medical student watching the surgeon. But the patient had marvellous recuperative powers, and was about again at an early date. Happily, the growth on the eye mentioned to Brian was successfully removed. Within six months, however, a further operation was necessary, as the eye had become fixed, and the driving of a car was rendered impossible. This fifth operation was likewise performed with skill and the best results.

After the goitre operation, the amazing patient took elocution lessons when a curate at St. Paul's, Portman Square. Always in some buoyant manner, he had the secret of beginning again. Surgeons could hardly have had a better advertisement than W. H. Aldis. Rejuvenation appeared in him to be constant.

As the war dragged on its stressful way, there came one experience which threatened to age the Home Director. In 1943 he had to confront the calendar with its grim dating of the years. He was now more than three score years and twelve, and decided to resign from the position of Home Director. When he began to realize all that withdrawal would mean for him, he was as a man stunned, and suffered intensely. Those who recall the impressive service for God with which he filled the next five years will be able, as they look back, to understand how a man with so much vitality in him would recoil from any contraction of his interests or human contacts.

The change was made from Newington Green to a home in Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells, which was a gift to Mr. and Mrs. Aldis for the duration of their lives. Retirement, however, as the oldest son humorously observed, demanded to be spelt " re-tyrement " when *his* father was in question. In a letter to a friend written later, the Home Director Emeritus, finding an outlet for his abundant energies in his attentions to the elderly missionaries gathered at Tunbridge Wells in two Homes, declared " I am running two gardens now." Indefatigable, he made himself the servant of all. A dear old lady later wrote to Mrs. Aldis : " They tell me Mr. Aldis helped every one."

But the perils of his life were not exhausted.

The country to the east of London, dearly as he loved it and glad

as he always felt to get back to it, was to become a place of fiery ordeal.

During the second period of the war new weapons were used against our country. Pilotless planes, flying bombs and rockets came hurtling and whining through the air, and crashing disastrously where they fell. This letter to his son tells its tale. It is dated 14th November, 1944. " We had a terrifying experience last night when a rocket dropped in Park Road about 250 feet from us and exploded with an ear-splitting noise and devastating effect. Mercifully no one was killed. These bombs are horrible, and I hope we shan't get any more.

" I have been engaged most of the night and all day in arranging about Mrs. Howard Taylor, who was in the Nursing Home outside of which the bomb fell. The inside of the Nursing Home was blown to smithereens, and I quite expected to find her dead. But no, she was sitting up in bed in the midst of the debris.

" I am tired out to-night, so cannot write more. I will write longer next time."

More of this undaunted alacrity to be of use somewhere, anywhere, is revealed in a letter from H. Millner Morris, Chairman at the time of the Homes to which he refers.

" When Fegan's Homes at Goudhurst suffered very badly from one of the flying bombs, Mr. Aldis came over first thing the following morning to find out how we were, and as I had to get away under doctor's orders, he willingly offered to go over from time to time, to advise and help in any way he could, so as to relieve my mind from anxiety. This was a most gracious, as well as a heroic, action at that time."

Relaxation from protracted alertness came at length, and with the end of the war the parents were free to take a deep breath after their long and strenuous life. They looked abroad on their sons, and the toils of the years were justified. Gordon was in China. Arnold had settled in Cardiff as a successful medical man, and was to give deep satisfaction to his father when he was elected President of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. After qualifying first as a teacher, Brian had followed his father into the work of the ministry, and was, like Arnold, married. That all three sons might be soul-winners was a prayer entered by the father's hand in his Book of Prayer Suggestions, and that ambition was being realized in a manner that stirred deep gratitude to God.

At an early date after the war, Mr. Aldis was forward with plans

and hopes for restarting the Keswick Convention. Eagerly he scanned the future, expecting it to be the grand season of youth. Generous scope for youth was more than ever a feature of his plans. In the great world-wide enterprise of the Gospel of Christ, he expected young men to occupy the places of danger and responsibility, just as they had so valiantly held the skies in the Battle of Britain. Being ever generous in his appraisal of youth and always eager to make space for the young, he was prepared to welcome young speakers to Keswick, as he also looked for a going forth of young men and women from Keswick on a great scale to the feebly-held missionary lines. That vision awaits its full justification still, but with undiminished confidence W. H. Aldis was calling for room to be given them, right to the end.

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The Breaking of the Day

WITH the war ended and the general situation reviewed, it was remarkable beyond telling that so many of his former friends and associates both in the C.I.M. and in the Keswick Movement had survived. Back in Keswick for the 1946 Convention, the Chairman surveyed the scene with deep emotion and unspeakable thankfulness. Concrete had been laid on the great sites in Skiddaw Street and Eskin Street. The pennants that speak of Faith, Love, Joy, Hope, and Peace, were fluttering again in the breeze, and the people who sang the great swelling hymns of praise were free ! Who can describe the emotion that surged through the Chairman's heart, or portray the gleam which often showed in his eloquent eyes. *Keswick again* ! Around him, still within call, were many of the familiar figures, J. Russell Howden (though unable to be present or to undertake the platform ministry) and Graham Scroggie, W. W. Martin and E. L. Langston, W. Wilson Cash (Bishop of Worcester) and Guy King, Theo. M. Bamber, and behind the scenes those indispensable friends A. W. Bradley and Clarence Foster. J. M. Waite had gone, and the war might have taken so many more ! Then the faces of earlier days came back to view : Bishop Taylor Smith, S. D. Gordon, Stuart Holden, W. Y. Fullerton, R. B. Stewart, and the men he once thought old !

After his return from the 1947 Convention, where Gordon had been his companion and the father had seemed a contemporary of his son, he wrote to a friend that he had driven his car to Keswick and back, making each journey in one day, and he added, " Not bad for an old man ! "

In the meanwhile, links with former colleagues in Germany were being re-established, and the thought of bringing over to Keswick some of the pastors and Mission-directors occupied his mind. Filling in the gaps of information after the long severance due to the war, he wrote to Pastor Offermann : " It was indeed good to hear from you again. I have often wondered how you were, and whether you had survived this terrible war, and I am glad to know that you are alive and well. I have very happy recollections of our fellowship together, both in this country and in Germany, and I hope that this fellowship may be renewed.

"You may not know that I have retired from the position of Home Director, as I had reached the retiring age. Thank God, I am quite well, and am again Chairman of the Keswick Convention.

"Now with regard to the friends about whom you write, Mr. Hoste and Mr. Gibb and Mr. Warren have gone to their Eternal reward. The first named was interned by the Japs with hundreds of missionaries. He was repatriated, and died about a month ago. Mr. and Mrs. Sloan both passed away, the latter went first. Mr. Willett also died, about three years ago.

"Our Mission buildings suffered some damage on two or three occasions, but no one was hurt."

The efforts made to bring over the recipient of the above letter proved in 1947 unavailing, but the Home Director Emeritus was able by his letters to hasten his liberation from wrongful imprisonment by the occupation forces. In 1948 Pastor Offermann re-visited Keswick, and shared that thrilling joy at the renewal of fellowship which had been such a moving feature of the Reception to Overseas Guests in 1947. But Pastor Offermann arrived one month too late to see his dear and much respected friend.

All things were in shape for Keswick. The programme was in the printers' hands, and to the astonishment of Council members, the name of their beloved Chairman was down an unusual number of times for giving the message as well as for presiding. June was well launched on its glorious way, and a visitor to Southborough saw a handbook with the summer's cricket fixtures lying on the Chairman's desk. The floodtide of early summer's vitality and freshness seemed everywhere.

In June, when Keswick is on the horizon, there is often a necessity for a telephone call to the Secretary, and there came one on a Monday morning. Almost as a routine part of politeness, one asked the question, "How are you?" The answer was, "I think I have a recurrence of gall stones. The pain has been acute. But don't tell anybody." A few days later we heard of the Chairman being here and there, fulfilling engagements, not being well, yet anon meeting Mr. Mitchell, sharing in a funeral. There were six elderly missionaries at whose successive funerals he had taken some part; the last was on the very day before his own swift departure to the Father's house.

The announcement of his death was a startling surprise to all who knew him. There was no time or opportunity to communicate the

news of his illness. God's finger touched him and he slept. Scores and scores of letters were received describing the shock that his passing had been to a great number of people. He alone had prescience that the call was near.

It was matter for thanksgiving to God that Gordon's departure to China by plane had been postponed through the intervention of Mr. Fred Mitchell. Gordon was at his father's and his mother's side when most they needed him.

Ernest Taylor had been laid to rest on Tuesday, 15th June. For his deaf and aged sister's sake, someone took down the words said at the funeral service. In his prayer, Mr. Aldis thus began : " We are gathered here, not with sadness but with true gladness, and we rejoice that our brother has passed into Thine own immediate presence, and he himself is now satisfied."

Within twenty-four hours there was cause to pen these words to Mrs. Aldis and to add : " And now, Dear friend, your beloved, too, is satisfied."

When he returned from the funeral of his friend, Mr. Aldis felt a spasm of piercing pain. He took a hot water bottle, and went upstairs to bed. Since Gordon was out, and Mrs. Aldis through her deafness never used the telephone, he took the precaution when going upstairs, to ring Miss Wilson in charge of the Boyne Park Home, and tell her the situation. She quickly secured a nurse, who was on duty when Gordon returned home. Then a doctor came and gave morphia. It seemed that the heart was not at this stage suspected. The one who had the clearest premonition of coming things was the sufferer himself. Yet he begged his wife not to sit up, but to take her rest.

In the early morning the nurse gave the first intimation that the heart looked uncertain. The doctor called and administered strychnine, and called a specialist. An X-ray photograph was taken and instantly developed. The " splodge " was plain to see. It was indicated to Mrs. Aldis that (using the language of earth) there was no hope, and he would not be conscious again. Within two hours, Mr. Greatheart was with the King, satisfied.

" Jesus said,
' Let us go over to the other side.'
'Twas but a step for His victorious feet
From their day's walk
Into the golden street."

The Funeral Service, after that eventful Wednesday, was held the following Monday in St. Stephen's Church, Tunbridge Wells. The note of triumph was dominant, as would have been his wish. Mr. Fred Mitchell presided, memorably, and Mr. Bradley read the Scripture. The great resounding words of Holy Writ rang out clear and majestic, and the worshippers in gratitude said within themselves, " How firm a foundation ! " Then the Rev. Russell Howden paid moving tribute to the prince of men who had walked among us, and the speaker's words were few, like a choice inscription carved in marble. Afterwards the Archbishop of Sydney pressed home on hearts that might still be unyielded to God, the invitation to come to Christ which sounded all through the life of our departed friend. Rain was falling at the graveside when Archbishop Mowll, a majestic figure in his great cape, conducted the committal service : " until the trump of God be heard."

When the Memorial Service was held in St. Paul's Church, Portman Square, on Tuesday 29th, June, Mrs. Aldis was present with her three sons.

Bishop Houghton was absent in Germany, but sent cabled greetings. Mr. Mitchell presided, and prayer was offered by Preb. C. Colin Kerr. Tributes were paid on behalf of the China Inland Mission, the Keswick Convention, the London Bible College, and the Missionary School of Medicine. The speakers were J. B. Martin, the Rev. Russell Howden, Montague Goodman and D. M. Miller.

The Service throbbed with triumph, and the accompanying music was rendered " in the Spirit " by an organist inspired. In the hands of the beloved Chairman it had often happened that the Keswick Hymn Book " came alive," and the same was true when from its pages the closing ceremony was made vibrant with praise.

The large company present was impressive both in numbers and in period of life ; not sad with the drooping shoulders of the aged, or sombre with the sense of human frailty and decay, but athrob with Christian assurance and radiant with the certain hope ; strikingly representative too of youth, youth ready to hear and answer the summons to serve the Christ, the King.

Thus the occasion passed to take its place in the chambers of memory while life shall last. And thus we shall think of him still as speaking from the country where the night has turned to day the land of everlasting youth.

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